AUSTRALIAN & BRITISH

SOCCER

VOL. 22 No. 1028 – TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2001 ● REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIAN POST ● PUBLICATIONS No. NBQ5726 WEEKLY $3.30 GST INCLUSIVE

Petkovic Off To Germany

Perth Glory's, Australian International goalkeeper, the outstanding Jason Petkovic.

Perth Glory goalkeeper, Jason Petkovic left the country on Monday morning for last-minute formalities towards signing a deal with German Bundesliga side Energie Cotttbus, reportedly worth about $1million. However, the 25year-old goaltender is still the subject of interest from another Bundesliga sider, Borussia Moenchegladbach.

According to facts emeging from the Western Australia-based Perth Glory, Petkovic will likely undergo a medical with the German clubsides, who are both vying for his signature. According to Glory club officials, a delegation from both Cottbuus and Moenchengladbach have approached Glory over the possibility of signing Petkovic, but there was no definite agreement on which club he would lace boots for.

"It's fortunate for Jason that the request should have come at this time with us having the bye, otherwise he wouldn't have been allowed to take this chance," Glory general manager Roger Lefort told Perth-based daily tabloid, the West Australian.

"I understand someone from the German club saw Jason in one of our away games and they wrote to us asking if he could be released.

Lefort further added that, "They are also looking at another European goalkeeper, but I, believe Jason is their preferred choice."

It was not clear what Petkovicís departure would mean to Glory's title aspirations, as the club is the forefront of qualifying for the crucial NSL final play-offs.

Club coach, Bernd Stange is believed to have sanctioned the transfer deal, expressing the confidence that the club has able replacements to fill the shoes of Petkovic.

Other-club sources however revealed that Petkovic would return to the club after signing the deal,to see out the ongoing NSL season, before finally leaving for Germany.

AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

Issue No. 1028
"Published every Tuesday by
F.L. Press
5-13 Garners Ave.,
Marrickville NSW 2204

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Tel: (02) 9562 0500

VICTORIA:
FLP Pty Ltd. 72-78 Gipps Street,
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QUEENSLAND:
Queensland Newspapers
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Tel: (08) 8218 9329

WESTERN AUSTRALIA:
Pan Hellenic Emporium,
67 James Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel: (08) 9328-4779
Recommended and maximum price.
$3.30
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Deadline for contributions, articles and advertising is 3 days PRIOR to issue date.

Rakic's Frankfurt deal in limbo

By Graham Cooke

After almost three weeks in Germany, Canberra Cosmos midfielder Andy Rakic has still to put pen to paper on a three-year contract with Bundesliga club Eintracht Frankfurt, and his patience, and that of his agent, Danny Himbrechts, is rapidly running out.

Eintracht made the initial running in the deal, insisting Rakic come to the club for trials even though he had only just recovered from an ankle injury and was in the middle of the National Soccer League season with Canberra.

And while the Germans initially offered the three-year deal, they now appear to be stalling, suggesting the formalities could be completed at a later date.

But that's not good enough for either Rakic or Himbrechts, who are agreed it is pointless keeping the options open in Germany when there are other interested parties, including Rapid Vienna and Sparta Prague.

And while Rakic has been training regularly at the Eintracht club, he does not want to lose match sharpness that only comes from playing regular competitive games.

That could see him back in Canberra to complete the remainder of the NSL season before resuming his quest for a European club.

Andy Rakic: Dark clouds surrounds his transfer to Eintracht Frankfurt.

VIS SQUAD OFF TO MALAYSIA

Ernie Merrick (Head coach) VIS.

By Roy Hay

Several Victorian youngsters will get their first taste of international Soccer when they travel to Malaysia next month with the Victorian Institute of Sport squad for a series of matches against the Malaysian Under-16, 17 and 18 teams. The team leaves Melbourne on 3 April and returns on the 12th.

Former AIS coach Ron Smith, who is overseeing youth development in Malaysia is the local contact.

VIS Head coach Ernie Merrick says, "The purpose of this Malaysian tour is to simulate a World Cup experience for the young players, as it is only a matter of time until some of this current squad progress to international representation." Indeed one of the current VIS intake, Spase Dilevski, has already been called up by Ange Postecoglou for the Australian Under-17s which played Japan over the weekend.

The VIS Soccer Program has established a proud tradition of producing a large number of players who have progressed to Joey, Olyroo and Socceroo honours. VIS graduates Michael Ferrante, Daniel Vasilevski, Steve Laurie, Ljubo Milicevic, Scott McDonald, Joey Di lorio and Joshua Kennedy are current members of the Young Socceroos who are competing in the Under 20 World Youth Championships. Con Blatsis, Peter Zois, Daniel Allsopp, Dragi Nastevski, Vince Grella and Simon Colosimo are gaining selection at

Olympic and Senior National Team level.

There are three players from country Victoria in the current VIS squad, Michael Popovski, Frank Lagana and Brendan Beni. Popovski has been very impressive in defence for theVIS in the National Youth League.

He also scored his first goal for the team recently. His coach said this week, "Michael Popovski is coming on by leaps and bounds. He has a great turn of speed. He is like lightning and is probably the fastest player in the squad. He is a confidence player and still thinks he is not as good as the others, but he is and he has to believe that."

The full squad to tour Malaysia is:

1 Fred Au - GK
2 Sammy De Vito - Def
3 Damien Ostrowski - Def
4 Manny Karas - Def
5 Michael Popovski - Def
6 CarlRecchia-Def/Mid
7 Ibraimlbraimi-Mid/Striker
8 DanielRocco-Midfield
9 Michael Sham-Yuen - Striker
10 RickyChillico-Mid/Striker
11 Steve Pantelidis - Mid/Def
12 Frank Lagana - Mid/Striker
15 Serkan Oksuz — Striker
16 Brendan Beni — Striker
17 Kristian Sarkies —Striker
18 Bobby Georgevski - Mid
19 Steve Mitrovski - Def
20 Christian Morales - GK
21 Evan Karavitis - Def

Sterrey's Newcastle days over

The Newcastle United Football Club will have a new coach in the revised twelve team competition next year as a result of the official decision today not to reappoint Lee Sterrey.

Newcastle United Owner Con Constantine and General Manager Jock Graham last week met with Lee Sterrey and advised him of the Club's decision. Constantine said "I want to thank Lee for his efforts in Newcastle over the last three years and wish him every success in his future endeavours in the code," Graham said.

"With the restructure of the National Soccer League next year it was time for a change with the club moving in a new direction in its bid to win a championship over the next three years.

Lee Sterrey: Newcastle's coach who is billed to stepdown at the of the season.

PLAYERS' BURNOUT WORRIES DEVILS' COACH

By Graham Cooke

Belconnen Blue Devils coach Lino Fiorese said goodbye to his squad after the club wound up its first NSW Premier League season, wondering what physical state they will be in when he gets them back again in September.

"By that time they will have been playing football almost continuously for 18 months, and will be facing another six months of hard competition," he said.

"I wonder how much the body can stand. I would really hope they decide not to play in the Federation Cup pre-season competition and take four weeks off before the serious business of the ACT Premiership. I think if they go back straight away, they will be struggling. But I can't stop them. It is up to the individual players."

Initial indications are that few Blue Devils will be taking any time off at all, with most slotting in for the last round of Federation Cup group matches, just eight days later.

Typical was the case of last season's minor premiers Gungahlin Juventus where Anthony Giannasca, Steve Lazzari, Oscar Zamora, George Cattanach and Matt Cachia (the latter, a new signing from Monaro) turned up for training on the Tuesday night following Belconnen's last game.

Juventus coach Ian Heywood said he was so concerned about burnout he sent them away again. "I've told them that for the next three weeks they are to go swimming on Tuesday nights when the rest of the squad concentrates on fitness and only join us on Thursdays for tactics and ball work," he said.

"After all, fitness should be their least concern."

Juventus has been especially hard-hit by Canberra's busiest soccer summer in history. As well as Belconnen, both firsts and reserves, it has supplied players to the Cosmos youth team and the ACT Academy, a total of 17 members of its playing strength.

"I'm not likely to get the Cosmos contingent back for six weeks, and now the Academy is talking about holding on to their squad through the winter," he said.

"If that happens we'll have to go back to scratch with the under-19s."

In addition to Cachia, Heywood has signed Peter Hader and Mils Spedojevic from Capital City Suns, but will have to do without Josh Whittington, who will need a knee reconstruction after injuring himself playing for Belconnen.

The only other regular member of last year's squad absent at the moment is veteran Danny Serena who is completing his baseball commitments.

Juventus are likely to be one of the strengths in the ACT Premiership again this season, although they will be challenged by Canberra Olympic and Canberra Deakin, the latter a side that has benefited from signing a batch of Blue Devils players.

With the emphasis now on the NSW competition, Belconnen itself will struggle to emulate its premiership-winning feat of 2000 and there are question marks over Monaro, especially now a serious injury has sidelined ACT representative Darryl North for what could be most of the season.

Angie unimpressed as Joeys, Japan play out stalemate

By Nick Guoth

Japan scored a late equaliser to snatch a 2-2 draw at the AIS Athletics stadium against the LG Joeys last Saturday night. In the first of the two friendlies between the teams the result proved a true reflection of the game.

"I thought it was a good hitout", said Joeysí coach Ange Postecoglou. "Both teams played well in patches."

Japan started well and dominated for the early going. With the Australians a little disjointed, the Japanese took advantage of poor marking at a corner to grab the lead with just under a quarter of an hour gone.

Playmaker for the Japanese, Kazumazu Takagi sent in a teasing corner kick from the right. It was met solidly by Hiroti Mogi who's glancing header was too strong for Jacob Rex to stop.

The Joeys slowly gained their feet and came back into the match. They were obviously more physical, but knew how to explode out of defence and threaten at the other end.

Five minutes from the break Matthew Engele saw his shot palmed by Kenta

okushige onto the upright and away for a corner and that was the closest the Joeys came for the half.

Then two minutes into the second period a free-kick just outside the box was rifled low past the wall and into the far corner by Massimo Murdocca to level the scorelines.

Australia pushed hard for the go-ahead goal, and although many had their heart in their mouth when Takagi combined again with Mogi only for the latter to spurn his chance with a free header wide of the mark, it was the Joeys who would take the lead with two-thirds of the game played.

Some nice work out from the back saw the ball come to Matthew Hunter on the right. His long cross convinced Tokushige to stay planted on his line and Engele leapt higher than his marker to head home from 15m out.

With the large number of substitutes the Joeys lost their rhythm and Shingo Nejime, himself a very late substitute, started to get extra room on the right inside the box.

In the 83rd minute he saw his first goal attempt smothered well by Rex, two minutes later it was a combination of Rex and a defender that denied him, but in the 88th he found the net.

Following a corner from the other end Japan broke well and found themselves one-on-one with the defence. The ball went to Yuki Nakishima who fed Sho Kitano and then to Nejime to finish.

With six minutes of extra time both sides finished frantically, but neither could muster a serious attempt at goal and the game came to an end with the 2-2 scoreline.

Postecoglou said that he was not too unhappy with the game. "We started slow, gained momentum in the middle of the game and let them back in the last 15 whem we made all the subs."

Line-Ups

Australia 2 (0)
Japan 2 (1)

Scorers: 13 0:1 Hiroti Mogi, 47 1:1 Massimo Murdocca, 60 2:1 Matthew Engele, 88 2:2 Shingo Nejime

AUSTRALIA: Jacob REX, Alex WILKINSON (Michael BROWN 71), Brett STUDMAN (Pedraj BOJIC 71), Matthew HUNTER, Ben STEVENS (Spase DILEVSKI 60), Mario KARLOVIC (Steven BAVEAS 39), Carl VALERI (Nick STAVROULAKIS 80), Fred AGIUS, Massimo MURDOCCA, Jay LUCAS, Matthew ENGELE (Steven MANCESKI 77)

JAPAN: Kenta TOKUSHIGE, Ryosuke ISHIZAKA, Takahito CHIBA (Junichi TAKAYAMA 62), Kiyohiro HIRABAYASHI (Yuki NAKASHIMA 46), Takuya MUGURUMA (Sho KITANO 70), Kohei KUDA (Shingo NEJIME 80), Masatomo KUBA, Naoya KIKUCHI, Kazumaza TAKAGI, Hiroti MOGI (Sho NARUOKA 74), Yutaro ABE (Kisho YANO 62).

Line-up of Australia's U/17 squad, Joeys before their friendly game against Japanese U/17 side last Sunday in Canberra.

Sydney Sports and Cultural Exchange

FORWARD

Sydney Sport & Cultural Exchange offers you and your team the opportunity to participate in an experience that unites countries from around the world the love of soccer.

Players will have the opportunity to engage in games against some of England's best youth teams and thereby gain invaluable experience.

There is also a possibility that we may participate in coaching clinics organised by the English F.A.

The international game guarantees everyone to emerge as a winner.

OBJECTIVE

Sydney Sport & Cultural Exchange is committed to the management, promotion, encouragement and development of competitive sport involving our young Australians in international tournaments.

The nature of our commitment, coupled with our success in organising several youth soccer tournament, has led to our official invitation as the Australian representative in the England FA Tournament which may include competing against teams which comprise the likes of Liverpool United, Leeds United, Manchester United and Leicester just to mention a few.

To be able to compete and play in trials, please complete the Personal Details on the last page of the brochure or contact one of our personnel for further details.

The ambition of Sydney Sport and Cultural Exchange is to provide the opportunity for young Australians to develop sporting knowledge with the rest of the world.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sydney Sport & Cultural Exchange generally stay at Keele University while the tournament is taking place.

Keele University is situated between Birmingham and Manchester as can be seen on the map and has numerous facilities available for the players.

Coaching Clinics are run in January and Easter Holiday periods to enable personnel to view the skills, ability and discipline of players trialing for selection.

Mr Archie Blue (ex-Socceroo) will be on hand to supervise and assist first hand during these coaching clinics.

SYDNEY SPORTS & CULTURAL, EXCHANGE

ARCHIE BLUE

Are Inviting Players in the 14 to 17 Age Group to participate in Trials to be held at Lambert Park, Leichhardt, during the Easter School Holidays for selection of squad members to participate in their forthcoming trip to the UK.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERESTED PARTIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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The Good Oil ... The Good Oil ...

By John Economos

PARRAMATTA POWER last Sunday at the Parramatta Stadium, switched off Sydney Olympic's lights with a resounding 3-1 win to deny Olympic any possible chance of seeking revenge for their 0-2 loss in the first round.

Peter Bennett: The Power's midfielder turns from hero to villain.

The Power's first goal nailed in the 25 th minute by industrious midfielder Peter Bennett, rocked Olympic.

However the tenacious Bennett crashed from hero status to villain when he was sent off in the 54th minute by referee Simon Micallef for alleged bad language hurled at one of his linesmen.

Because Olympic this season has got out of jail very late in games on no less than five occasions, this early setback was quickly forgotten.

But when the Power's strapping striker, 19 year old Luke Roodenburg, doubled the scoreline seconds before 'drinks', the visitors plunged into total despair to give their worse performance of the season, despite against an opposition that was a man down.

With the Power's right-wingback Ahmad Elrich adding yet another in the 67th minute, Pablo Cardozo's goal three minutes from the bell was purely academic.

The Power for most of the season has disappointed.

Yet with just six rounds left, (and almost certainly out of 'Top Six' calculations), all of a sudden the Power has turned on a surge of unexpected energy that electrified Olympic.

Why was this so?

Maybe because the Power players have now been made fully aware that all of them will be having their contracts closely reviewed come end of season.

Already former England Youth international and Chelsea import, David Lee, has been released by the Power from his contract. He won't be the last.

●●●●

And speaking of Sydney Olympic, what came over them last Sunday at the Parramatta Stadium where they gave such a pathetic performance?

Did it have something to do with the absolutely ludicrous $1 million bonus promised to the Olympic players just the day before last Sunday's match at training?

A $1 million pile of cash to win the Championship!!!

If that was so, what a horrendous investment decision that proved to be 24 hours later.

Were the Olympic players too preoccupied during the game against the Power with how they were going to spend their latest fondly, found fortunes?

It didn't escape 'Good Oil's' attention, but towards the end of the match, one Olympic attacker made some very clear and antagonistic signals to one of his very own defenders.

So much for team unity and spirit. Without unity and spirit, any team has 'Bob Hope's cousin's chance of gaining success'.

NO HOPE.

Pablo Cardozo: Olympic's sole scorer last Sunday.

●●●●

THE LEAGUE's top four marksmen, (Despotovski, Mori, Burgess and Petrovski), all failed to score last weekend.

The quartet of goalscorers, between them have amassed no less than 60 goals.

Burgess' Northern Spirit managed to salvage a scoreless draw, (0-0 against Marconi), whilst Petrovski's Wollongong Wolves suffered a 0-1 loss to South Melbourne last Friday night and in a re-scheduled match had a 1-1 away draw against Adelaide City.

Ben Burgess: The Spirit's towering goalscorer.

●●●●

HEIDELBERG UNITED SOCCER CLUB has announced that it has signed former player Joe Palatsidis following his successful stint in the Greek League.

Coach and former Australian international Peter Ollerton stated: "Joe will add stability to our side and his experience will great help in guiding my young team"

●●●●

NEWCASTLE UNITED, yet again last Friday night at the Marathon Stadium managed to stop the star-studded Perth Glory in its tracks by downing the Western Australians 1-0.

A goal ten minutes after 'drinks' by Newcastle's star stopper Todd McManus ultimately proved to be enough to sink Glory.

"It was a good, solid team effort," United's coach Lee Sterrey stated to 'Good Oil'.

It appears that the Novocastrian team is the only side in the League that with monotonous regularity has proven to be more than a thorn in the Glory's side.

Rarely has the Glory's dynamic strike-duo of Bobby Despotovski and Damian Mori, (who to date have piled on 32 goals), been held scoreless.

And what an absolutely astonishing comeback by Newcastle who just seven days prior had been mercilessly trounced 9-4 by the Wollongong Wolves. at the WIN Stadium.

Todd McManus: Newcastle United's star stopper.

●●●●

RONNIE CORRY, the Wollongong Wolves' phlegmatic coach is getting more concerned of late with his target of grabbing second spot on the League ladder come the end of the season.

First he witnessed his side two weeks ago slide to its second defeat of the season to the Canberra Cosmos to drop three precious League points.

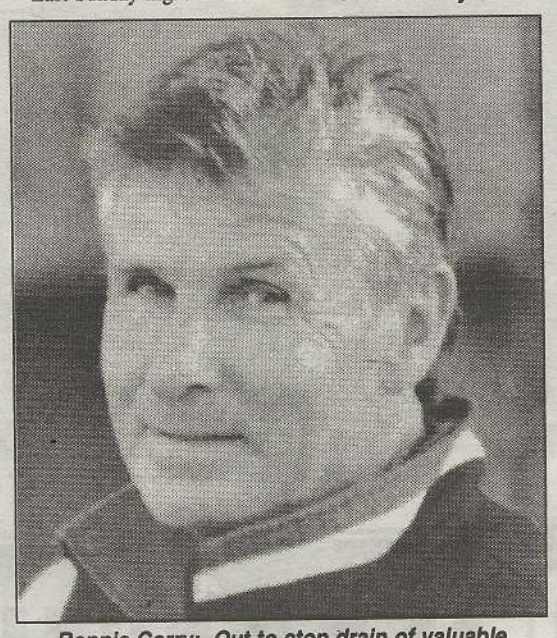
Last Friday week Corry's combine totally trounced Newcastle United 9-4, but then last Friday night, after deliriously dominating the game, Wollongong lost 0-1 to League leaders South Melbourne to see yet another three League points go down the drain.

Last Sunday night in their re-scheduled match against Adelaide City, Wollongong squandered yet another two precious League points as the South Australians held Wollongong to a 1-1 draw.

Out of a possible 12 from their last four outings, Wollongong has secured a miserly four League points.

This Sunday afternoon Wollongong travels up to Sydney to clash with the vastly improved Sydney United.

The Sydney side will be in no mood to extend Corry any favours in his hot pursuit to climb over second placed Sydney Olympic who sit just one point ahead of the current League champions.



Ronnie Corry: Out to stop drain of valuable League points.

●●●●

SBS-TV will screen highlights of the Second semi-final F.A. Cup final between Wycombe Wanderers (Division 2) and Liverpool from Villa Park, on Monday 9th April at 11.35pm.

SBS once again has secured the exclusive free-to-air rights for the F.A. Cup Final that will be covered Live on Saturday May 12th direct from the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, Wales.

The telecast will kick off at 10.30pm a.e.s.t.

Heading the SBS panel on F.A. Cup final night again will be SBS' Head of Sport, Les Murray with Soccer analyst John Warren plus special guests.

Four teams remain in the F.A. Cup.

John Warren: SBS' Soccer analyst.

The other semi final is between the two London giants, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspurs.

●●●●

LES SCHIENFLUG, the long-serving former Australian Youth team coach, was most surprisingly spotted last Thursday evening participating in Marconi's training session.

Strange.

Did this mean something was really brewing out at the 'Palace'?

Not so, according to Marconi's head coach Eddie Krncevic.

"He was welcomed to come out and give a few new ideas out to my players.

"I invited Les to come, and many positives came out of this training session.

Les Scheinflug: At Marconi's training last week.

"He made quite a few good points really.

"After all, Les is the National Technical Director and his assistance was appreciated by me and the players," ended Krncevic.

●●●●

SYDNEY UNITED this Sunday at the Sydney United Sports Centre, has brought forward its kick-off time against the visiting Wollongong Wolves by an hour to 3.00pm.

United's new coach and the Club's former sterling stopper, Velimir Kupresak, has injected fresh vigour to the team since taking over.

Velimir Kupresak: Has quickly settled into the coaching role.

Last Saturday United again collected another most valuable win when it accounted for Canberra Cosmos 1-2 with both United strikers Menapi and Awaritefe scored.

The ever-green Kupresak played 11 consecutive years with United since joining the Sydney side from Victorian State League side St Albans.

●●●●

IAN CROOK, the Northern Spirit's former assistant coach, has recently been rated he will be parting company with the Spirit at the end of this season.

Ian Crook: Which club will he take over?

Newcastle United and the Perth Glory have been loudly mentioned arounds the traps by many as being Crook's destination.

All 'Good Oil' is at liberty to say, (at this point), is that it won't be the Perth Glory.

That position has already been promised to someone after Bernd Stange leaves the Club.

●●●●

DESPITE just having seen his team drop two valuable League points against the defiant Northern Spirit last Saturday night, Marconi's coach Eddie Krncevic stated:

"I was happy with our attitude tonight shown by all my players. We had more than a couple of chances, but without Angelo Costanzo (suspended), Buddy Farah (on national duty with Lebanon) and Brendan Renaud (suspended), it was encouraging.

"We will have both Costanzo and Renaud back next Friday night for our away match against Adelaide City. We could have sneaked it in at the very end (against the Spirit).

"Michael Turnbull did well in goals, especially as it was his first game this season back in the first team. We must keep plugging away as next Friday against Adelaide it's really a 'six pointer' for us if we can win.

"The week after next we have the Perth Glory at home.

"The Spirit really had nothing but pride to play for and they gave us a hard game," summed up Krncevic.

Eddie Krncevic: Marconi's coach satisfied by his team's attitude.

The Good Oil ... The Good Oil

By John Economos

MICKEY HICKMAN, the Spirit's coach, after holding Marconi to a scoreless draw last Saturday night at the Marconi Stadium, reflected:

"We miss our captain Mike Smith who is still struggling a bit with his fitness. I thought Matthew Bingley with his pace covering at the back had an excellent match, and he is infectuous to the others. In the second half we improved a lot and I feel we are getting closer. It's a good start for next season I believe.

"I'm here to improve and encourage players to play good football and be comptetitive to the best of my ability," ended 'Hickey'.

Mickey Hickman: The Spirit's hard-working coach.

●●●●

SYDNEY OLYMPIC's home match this Sunday at the Belmore Sports Ground against the Canberra Cosmos, will kick off at 5pm, and NOT at the usual starting time of 6.30pm.

Olympic's General manager Peter Raskopoulos stated to 'Good Oil' last night:

"With Daylight Saving now at long last well and truly over, we thought it would be most advantageous to the Soccer fan that we start the main game 90 minutes earlier so they can get home earlier.

"Our Youth League match will start at 2.30pm," Rasko added.

Peter Raskopoulos: Sydney Olympic's General manager.

●●●●

SOUTH MELBOURNE this Friday, is staging its annual Grand Gala Auction for the year at the 'Albert By The Lake'.

Kick-off time is 7.00pm sharp when pre-dinner drinks will be served.

Luxurious and classy items have been billed as being put up for bidding.

Entertainment will come in the form of Special Guest, 'Wogboy Star' Con Kilias who will act as the M.C. for the evening.

All inclusive tickets to this bright evening cost $55.

●●●●

BALGOWNIE RANGERS, coached by former Wollongong Wolves' great Jock Morlando, last Thursday night lost the Fraternity Cup final to Bulli.

Balgownie led by former Marconi and Australian international Tommy McCulloch, were locked in at 2-2 with seconds to go when the Bulli boys scored the winner.

Jock Morlando: Balgownie's disappointed coach in Cup Final.

●●●●

SYDNEY OLYMPIC's Youth team coach, Michael Urukalo, will be taking his squad across to Malaysia at the end of May.

The athletic Urukalo who spent three years coaching in Malaysia and Singapore, has arranged four matches to be played, including games against Kuala Lumpur and Johor.

This Saturday night a fund-raising dinner has been organised at the Mediterranean House at Five Dock to help finance the air-lift to Kuala Lumpur.

A special item that will be auctioned on the night,is a genuine 'Olympiakos' shirt, autographed by all the Greek first division players, which was organised by Urukalo.

Mega Travel Agent of Liverpool has been engaged by Sydney Olympic to handle the team's air-lift which will be done by Malaysian Airlines.

Michael Urukalo: Olympic's Youth coach taking his squad to Malaysia.

Olympic's Youth squad will fly out on May 31st and return June 10.

●●●●

STUART MUNRO, the former coach of Carlton, has been left not the least amused by the media speculation running rife in Sydney of late, as to which club he is likely to be taking over next season.

The former granite-hard professional from Scotland giants Rangers, migrated to Australia four years ago.

Having played seven straight years for Rangers, the highly experienced Munro was enticed by his former Rangers' team-mate, David Mitchell, to play again.

Despite Munro having already retired, Mitchell encouraged him to play some games to help him out when Mitch was Head coach at United.

Munro more than proved his worth when he ended up playing 22 games that season for United.

Having married an Australian girl, Munro had decided he wanted to settle in Australia.

"My son was born at Morwell, (Latrobe Valley), as well, so why not make my life here in Australia?" Munro told 'Good Oil' in Sydney last week-end.

But the highly experienced, no nonsense Scot, has been far from amused in recent weeks by the wild rumours flying about as to which club he is taking over.

The Northern Spirit, Perth Glory and Newcastle United have all been speculated as targets as to where Munro will end up next season.

All total crap, and here's why.

The placid, intelligent Munro, went on to emphatically state to 'Good Oil':

"Look, not one single club has spoken to me whatsoever about any coaching role, either here in Sydney, or anywhere else in Australia, for that matter,

"Sure right now I'm unemployed. But where the newspapers are getting these wild stories, I honestly don't know.

"It's making me feel a little uncomfortable as some coaches could be looking over their shoulders at me," surmised the placid, though perplexed Munro.

In moving back to Sydney, the Munro family a few weeks back had the misfortune of losing all of their personal belongings.

Whilst in the processes of moving, the Munro family had their possessions held in storage.

Stuart Munro: Not amused by recent media speculation.

However the storage depot caught fire which completely gutted the building.

The always serious Munro lamented: "We lost everything. You don't mind so much losing all your furniture, but we lost irreplaceable possessions.

"Items such as valuable videos of my playing days back in Scotland and wedding photos, videos etc, that no money can buy them back for you."

●●●●

WHO were the two high profiled Soccer identities that had more than a little clash of personalities last week?

In fact it was a little more than a barrage of verbal abuse that was being hurled at each other in a plush hotel.

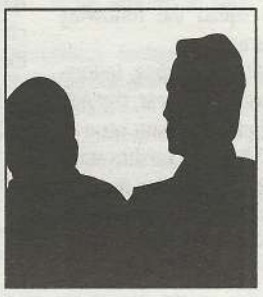
Both Soccer identities are egomaniacs and both are millionaires.

The scuffle fell just short of physical violence between the two, with one of the lunatics threatening the other, 'not to even think of venturing into his home State'.

One personality is a firmly established, (and successful), NSL Club identity, whilst the second is about to step back into the NSL next season, also at a club level.

'Good Oil' is certain that this feud will have many sequels.

Readers of this column should keep an 'Eagle eye' out for future developments.



In the blue corner, weighing ——

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RUSSELL CROWE last night in Hollywood may have won this year's Oscar Award for Best Actor in the 'Gladiator'.

But he is by no means the only 'Best Actor' around.

In fact looking at some of the NSL games played this season, we have spotted many 'Best Actors' on the pitch.

'Actors' who are highly skilled in impersonating as 'players', or 'actors' who have developed the finer art in 'diving' to milk free kicks, (or even penalties), from any off-guard referees.

Russell Crowe: 'Best Actor', but doesn't play in the NSL.

However not all referees have been totally off-guard, as we have already seen this season, and on many occasions.

Since the League kicked off this season, we have seen more and more referees flashing 'yellows' to these 'actors' for diving.

●●●●

A stranger with a Dutch accent was spotted last Sunday night lurking around at the Parramatta Stadium.

After some inquiries it was established that the Dutchman was non other than Feyenoord's Director of Football, Mr Rob Baan.

It appears that Mr Baan is in Sydney to finalise some type of link-up with the Parramatta Power.

The Power's head coach David Mitchell who played almost 15 years in Europe, also had a stint with Feyenoord.

David Mitchell: Attracts the attention of his old Dutch Club, Feyenoord.

Gary Phillips: Tonga's national coach.

AUSTRALIA's first opponent in the Oceania World Cup qualifiers that blast off next month in Coffs Harbour, will be Tonga.

And who would you believe is the national coach of Tonga?

None other than former Sydney Olympic and Brisbane Striker's midfield dynamo, Gary Phillips.

Phillips played in the 1997 Grand Final for the Brisbane Strikers under player-coach Frank Farina.

On April 9th, at 5.30pm and at the International Sports Centre, Farina will be sitting on Australia's bench whilst Phillips will be sitting on Tonga's bench.

Even more ironical, Phillips was born in Coffs Harbour, the very same venue where the Oceania World Cup qualifiers will be staged.

So as far as Phillips is concerned, it will actually be a 'home game' for him.

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS
vs
FRASER PARK

ROCKDALE ILINDEN SOCCER CLUB

"The SUNS first home match of the
2001 SUPER LEAGUE"

Sunday 1st April 2001
at the
Rockdale Ilinden Sports Centre
Kick-off: 1st Grade — 3.00pm, U21s — 1.00pm, U18s — 11.00am

Special Family Tickets — $10 for 2 Adults and 2 Children
Special Guests and Prizes too

Youth League Players (Under 13s, 14s, 15s, 16s) still needed. Contact Mendo Cklamovski, Club Secretary on 0419 287 907

MITCHELL JOHNSON: NEWCASTLE'S NEWEST STAR

By Mark Stavroulakis

Newcastle United might be going through a rough trot at the moment, but one thing's for sure, the future looks bright for the club.

With many outstanding youngsters making their debuts this year for the club, the development is on the way up for the Novacastrians.One youngster in particular who has blossomed this season, is 18-year-old attacking midfielder Mitchell Johnson.

Mitch started his career at local club Adamstown Rosebuds where he spent two solid seasons as a 13 and 14 year-old before heading off to the Newcastle Breakers for the next two seasons. "Playing for the Rosebuds was good as I had the chance to play in the Super Youth League against better opposition. The following two seasons I was at the Breakers where I played in the same competition but due to the Rosebuds folding, the Breakers were the only club in that competition," said the young Newcastle lad.

During his younger years, Johnson represented Northern NSW in two National Titles, which at that time was a huge honor for the Newcastle ace. "I played for the U15 and U16 NNSW squads, and during my two Nationals I was honored to be a part of something as big as these titles. My U16 National Titles in Canberra was the highlight of my career as that was where I was chosen for the AIS squad the following year," said the young gun.

After having an outstanding tournament in the Nationals that year, the AIS stepped in and signed Johnson on a 1-year scholarship. "My scholarship started in January 2000 and ran for the next 12 months. It was a great experience at the Institute as professionalism was at it's best. Coach Steve O'Connor was really good and he taught me many things that made me develop into a better player. Captaining the AIS was also a highlight as the responsibility of leading a young determined side made me a much stronger player. Also participating in a huge overseas tournament in Italy playing the likes of Lazio, River Plate,

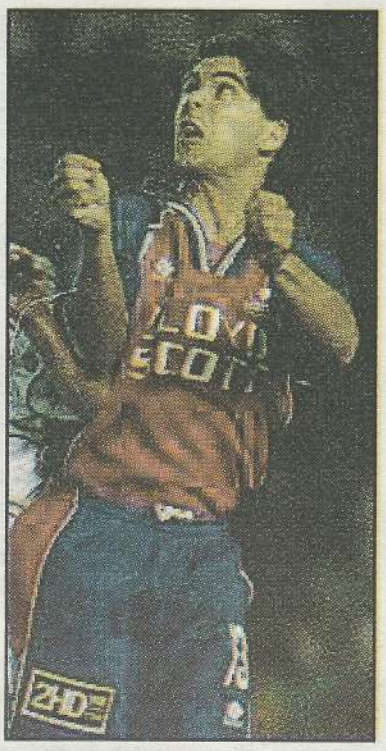
Youth Profile

Inter Milan was also a huge achievement for myself as it gave me a first hand look at what overseas youngsters are like," said the AIS graduate.

"I really had a great time at the AIS, but it was time to move onto another challenge and that's where I signed for the Newcastle United side on a first grade contract," said the enthusiastic 18-year-old.

Johnson was given a two-year deal by Newcastle, and now has the chance to show case his skills in the best competition in Australia.

So far in his short career at the top, young Mitch has made seven appearances for the club, and with the season coming to an end, one thing is for sure - his presence could figure in the last couple of games. "I'm quite happy at the club, they've given me the opportunity in the first team and I'm doing the best that I can to try claim a spot for the following week. I was buzzed about starting my first game against the Auckland Kings a couple of weeks back, and since then I've never looked back," said the number 25.



Mitchell Johnson: Newcastle United's youngster and rave-of-the-moment

The people of Newcastle really love their football, and Marathon stadium has been one of the best crowds of the competition. "The people of Newcastle are really passionate about their football and always come out to support us. I think with more consistent results, we'd be getting about 10,000 at least," said the young Newcastle star.

The club is going through a tough time however, with inconsistent results and the news of coach Lee Sterry's contract finishing this season, tough times have hit the Novacastrians. "It has not been going too well for the team lately as results haven't gone our way. Lee has told the boys to try their best and give their 100% in getting a much more respectable position come end of the year", said the former Whitebridge High student.

Mitchell's dream is to play in the Italian Serie A, and at the tender age of 18, that dream might soon be realized.

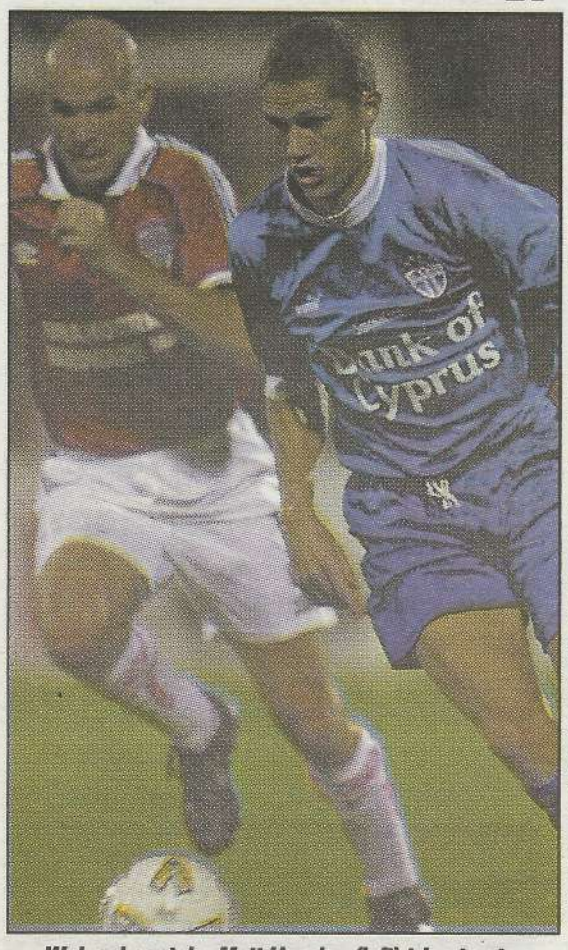
WOLLONGONG NEWS

By Otto Bader

WOLVES ATTACK — strike force was in action with nine goals against Newcastle, watched by admiring fans at WIN Stadium. Goal "Getter" Sasho Petrovski after a meagre spell has emerged with vengeance, scoring two hat-tricks in the space of weeks.

The consequence is that opposition defenders will pay special attention to Petrovski, marking him very, very close from now on to stop his progress. it is up to the striker to demonstrate skill and strength to shake off defenders. Luckily he is able supported by team mates and fellow strikers Scott Chipperfield and Stuart Young.

The Wolves in addition have several other capable players, eager to put their names on the score sheet. The big test came up with matches against front runners South Melbourne and Sydney Olympic. The side has to show quality in those games. Petrovski is now the club's leading scorer and will find the going tough with every coming match in his attempt to become Australia's top NSL "Goal King".



Wolves' captain, Matt Horsley (left) tries to stop South Melbourne's Vaughan Coveny during their clash over the weekend.

POSSIBLE TEAM CHANGES — considered by coach Ron Corry are on the cards. Not so much to the starting eleven, unless injuries force his hands. The goalkeeper position could be rotated. Fringe players could be called upon the bench, giving them the chance to prove their value to coach and club.

TIGHTEN DEFENCE — toughen-up, that is coach Ron Corry's word to his "leaking" defence in the recent outing, conceding four goals in 10 minutes of play.

The focus at training during the week was on tightening things up. In order to stay close to the competition leaders the Wolves cannot afford to slacken at the back, goalkeeper and defenders need to concentrate and communicate.

RUN-HOME — for the Wolves is not easy, no pardons given or expected in the remaining games. All opponents to be played are keen to bring the champions down, the likes of South Melbourne, Adelaide City, Sydney United, Sydney Olympic, Eastern Pride, Auckland Kingz, Northern Spirit and again Adelaide City (at home WIN Stadium) are either playing for high stakes like top six or without being under any pressure, just playing for next season's contracts, thus lifting their games. The Wolves are able to reach a high spot, knowing it won't be easy.

WOLVES CUBS — had various results against Blacktown Demons at Brandon Park. U/11s won 2-1, U/12 lost 0-2, U/13s lost 0-3, U/14s drew 1-1, U/15s lost 1-3 and U/17s went down 0-3.

ILLAWARRA CORRIMAL LEAGUES CLUB K.O. — final had everything, drama, goals, extra time and penalty shoot-out. Western Suburbs overcame Port Kembla 5-4 in a penalty shoot-out, first scoring through Paul Robards before Port equalised with Matt Callaghan.

In between opportunities were wasted, no goals in 15 minutes each way extra time, needing a shoot-out to determine the winner. The fans enjoyed the action.

Third place money went to Lysaghts, winning 1-0 with an own goals by an unfortunate Albion Park W.E. defender.

The knock-out running over four weekends, sponsored for the last 39 years by the Corrimal Leagues Club, saw some close games and some surprise results. It gave all clubs valuable pre-season practice matches.

SHELLHARBOUR BARBARIANS — located at Barrack Heights Oval, grounds (3) with a long Soccer tradition, going back to 1967, are fielding 17 junior teams this coming season from U/6 to U/14s plus a girls side. So far 213 kids have been registered with some vacancies still to fill in the U/11s to field two teams.

Training days commenced from Monday 19/3, any questions please contact Tode on phone 4295 1582. The girls kick-off on Sunday 8th April with the Bonnie Lass cup at Barrack Heights. In the senior ranks the club is fielding three teams, head coach Roberto Hernandez plus Reserve and Youth Grade coaching staff.

In total 50 players are being registered. The club plays in First Division with a bunch of young players, training nights Tuesdays and Thursdays at Barrack Heights.

SHELLHARBOUR WORKERS SUPPORT SOCCER — besides several other sports and community groups. On Thursdays 5th April a presentation of the club's sponsorship towards Shellharbour City Soccer Club takes place Soccer coach Rodney Haggerty, President Dennis Morris and Secretary Craig Hannan will gratefully accept the assistance provided by the powerful Workers club.

WESTERN SUBURBS SOCCER CLUB — are having their season launch on Saturday 31/3, at major sponsor the Western Suburbs Leagues Club. The date also sees the kick-off the ICU Premier League with West playing Shoalhaven City in round one at Unanderra Oval on Saturday afternoon.

The evening launch stars from 6.30pm, ticket $35 each, contact Secretary Bill Martinoski on 4275 7583 at work or home 4226 5845.

CONFERENCE LEAGUE KICK-OFF — The First Division KICKS OFF next weekend. Draw for Saturday 31/3. Albion Park W.E. v Illawarra United, Tarrawanna v Highlands, Dapto v Barbarians, Fernhill v Woonona, University v Berkeley, Helensburgh v Shellharbour City, Bellambi v Warilla Wanderers, Kiama v South Coast United, Ruse have the bye.

Seventeen clubs with three grades each compete over 17 rounds, each side playing each other once, due to the number of entries and time factors.

Looking at the prospects of each teams the two clubs coming down from Premier League, Tarrawanna and Albion Park W.E. have to be favoured as strong contenders for top spots on the table.

They will be challenged by Bellambi — a club strengthened by the influx of several top players, coached by Barney King. Helensburgh with player coach Joe Brcic looks solid again.

University of Wollongong, coach Daniel McGoldrick will surprise everybody with new students joining every year proving a huge obstacle for opponents. Kiama, coach Brod Crighton, done well last year and attempt to secure top four positions. Woonona, coach to be named, have lost last year's coach Ian Cirson and several first graders.

Fernhill, coach Ian Funnel, are re-building with a new squad. South coast United, coach David Skeen, look strong, ready to storm up the ladder.

Dapto has a new coach in Chris Dunleavy and attracted a few experienced players but lost a few too. Highlands, coach Brian Hollywood, always field a strong side and are expected to compete well. Berkeley with new coach mark Gallagher are trying to re-live old glory days.

Illawarra United with coach Cane Despotovski can spoil plenty of hopeful contenders. Barbarians with new coach Roberto Henandez have a mixture of youth and experienced performers, aiming to do better. Warilla Wanderers with new coach Billy Kyriadis have assembled a solid squad expected to do well, going by results in pre-season friendlies. Shellharbour City with new coach Rodney Haggerty have attracted some talented youngsters, mixed with proven performers, could do well, even though only time will tee for moulding together.

Overall teams have improved player strength and clear favourites are hard to predict.

ILLAWARRA JUNIORS — at present a record number of 5,877 kids have registered, making up 258 teams, a huge task for the competition secretary to sort out. Several Girls sides have entered in U/12, U/14s, U/16s and U/18s.

Action commences with the annual Gala Day for from U/10s to U/18s including the Girls on various grounds from Friday 6th April, Saturday 7th and Sunday 18th the finals at Kiama Leisure Centre.

Several thousands more juniors are expected to register at training start and completion of the cricket season.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS MEDAL OF THE YEAR 2000 — were awarded to Junior Soccer officials David Ware and Mrs Dawn Power.

The presentation was made by the Mayor of Kiama for their contribution to Soccer in Kiama — David Ware is the Illawarra Junior Soccer Association competition secretary and Mrs Dawn Power is a member of the very busy Management Committee, congratulation to both officials for their tireless work.

ISA WEB SITE — the Illawarra Soccer Association has it's own web site, arranged by Fish Inter Net, it is soccerillawarra.asn.au — draws, results and coming games will be shown. Fish Inter Net is sponsoring Illawarra Soccer and has offered anyone who purchases time a special reward.

Moment of Madness haunts Boutsianis

By Bert van Bedaf

The career of South Melbourne player Con Boutsianis is in the balance after the attacking midfielder last week pleaded guilty to the theft of $54,000 from a Melbourne restaurant three years ago. Victorian editor Bert van Bedaf looks back from the day Boutsianis turned grand final match winner after having been involved in the ill-fated robbery.

A historic occasion, the 1998 NSL grand final was played on Saturday night, May 16, at Olympic Park in Melbourne under lights for the time. Con Boutsianis scored the winning goal, while none of the 15,706 spectators knew he'd already been charged with armed robbery and had taken his place on the field on bail.

Boutsianis remained cool under pressure on both counts, but, although the goal earned him praise, his moment of madness might cost him his career.

The deciding goal (in South's 2-1 title win against now defunct club Carlton) revealed a lot about Boutsianis's abilities and instincts. John Anastasiadis had given South the lead after eight minutes. Marcus Stergiopoulos had equalised for Carlton in the 78th minute and the enervating final seemed destined for extra time.

Then South coach Ange Postecoglou brought on Boutsianis as a substitute for Anastasiadis. In the 88th minute he chased a long ball while tussling to get past Carlton skipper Sean Douglas. Douglas fell. Boutsianis kept going and beat Carlton 'keeper Dean Anastasiadis to strike the winner.

From the sidelines it looked like Boutsianis had made contact with Douglas on the way. But (now retired) referee Eugene Brazzale allowed play to continue. After the match Douglas claimed Boutsianis had tripped him and he should have been awarded a free-kick. Boutsianis asserted his innocence.

In any event, Brazzale had seen nothing untoward in the challenge.

A few days after the final, Boutsianis alleged involvement in the robbery on the offices of a Melbourne restaurant on January 12 (1998) became public. He told police he'd driven the getaway for a person who'd allegedly had committed the robbery, in which two female staff had been threatened with what looked like a weapon (a replica gun) and tied up. A third person was said to be the brains behind the robbery, which was also alleged to have been an insurance scam and committed with the knowledge of the business owner.

In December 1998, the armed robbery charge against Boutsianis was dismissed in the Magistrate's Court, because of lack of evidence. But the Victorian Office of Public Prosecutions overturned the decision believing police had sufficient evidence to sustain the charge. It ordered Boutsianis, 29, and the co-accused to stand trial in the County Court on May 15 last year. The trial was adjourned until last week, March 23, because of incapacity of the co-assused, who is now considered unable to stand trial.

Boutsianis, through his lawyers decided to plead guilty to the lesser charge of theft last Friday. He is awaiting sentence next Monday.

The robbery tragically has affected Boutsianis off and on the field.

His parents, Greek immigrants who were proud of their son's football achievements, no longer come to watch him. His image as a role model for aspiring, young footballers must be considered tarnished.

South Melbourne dumped Boutsianis, who had served the club from 16-years-of-age onwards, shortly after the grand final. In August, 1998, he signed with Perth Glory. It was an unhappy union and the opportunity cropped up to move to English first division club Bolton Wanderers in March last year.

He was to go on loan until the end of June, but when his May court appearance became known the deal fell through. The striker may also have missed out on a deal with a Belgian club because of his alleged crime.

Under coach Mike Petersen, South Melbourne decided to re-sign Boutsianis for the season. "He wanted to come back and help the club do well," South president George Vasilopoulos said.

However, Boutsianis had to consent to a special clause in his one-year contract. It includes the option the club is entitled to sever his contract if he is convicted.

National coach Frank Farina was considering Boutsianis for a Socceroos call-up during the team's World Cup qualifying tournament next month. This is now also in jeopardy.

Like Petersen, Farina wished to judge Boutsianis on his football merits and not what is happening off the field. "The call-up is subject to a number of things and all of them are football related," Farina said last week.

Soccer Australia chairman Frank Labbozetta is said to be against the player's selection in the squad, while a Soccer Australia spokesperson indicated Boutsianis was still in contention.

The motives for Boutsianis' alleged act are hard to fathom. The player was said to be hard up for cash. His lawyer Con Heliotis QC said his client had been under "extreme financial pressure" when agreeing to take part.

Alleged to have driving his own car at the robbery, Boutsianis is said to have received $1000 for his efforts, hardly the sort of money for which a talented player would want to risk his career.

Heliotis claimed Boutsianis, who is currently earning around $70,000 a year at South, had lost up to $3 million in career earnings" because of the robbery and suggested his client had been "stupid" in becoming involved, defending his actions as "doing no more than effectively being a taxi driver".

County Court Judge Leslie Ross was unimpressed, saying, "You'll get nowhere with that. He knew what he was doing."

On Monday Boutsianis will know whether his future will hold a period behind bars or not. Whatever the outcome, a renewed glittering career in soccer seems sadly out of the question for the gifted but wayward player.

Con Boutsianis: His involvement in a robbery incident is now casting dark clouds over his soccer career.

SOCCER WOMAN BY JANENE MAR

Matildas Fortunas (2)

Sharon Black: On duty for Australia.

SHARON BLACK

How difficult was it to get used to the weather, and in what ways does the weather affect the football?

We are just coming out of winter (I hope)and the weather has been an experience. Riding your bike to training in minus 15 degrees and having to combat the snow is something else. It has been difficult to get used to. Much colder than anything I have experienced in Australia - even Canberra in the height of winter.

We have been training indoors quite a bit. Luckily they provide for the weather in that there are a few full-size indoor pitches within two hours of here. We've done a fair bit of road running as well. It's pre-season, so no games have been postponed.

What was it like adjusting to a new culture and language? Are there any funny incidents you'd be willing to share with us?

It was initially difficult with the language differences but now that I have got to know people, they are more willing to speak English and I have picked up a little of the Danish language.

No real funny incidents yet, but it is tradition here that when you reach 30 (which is me next month), then you are smothered in pepper by everyone. Not too enjoyable I hear. If I get married in the next month I am saved of this, but I can't see that happening, so I will have to deal with the pepper.

Outline a typical training week for us.

We train four nights a week. Monday is weights and then individual technical training. Tuesday is a harder night with small games, sprints and then interval games which are really intense but really enjoyable. Thursday is similar to Tuesday but there is a little tactical work thrown in. Friday is a lighter session as we play on Saturday or Sunday. On top of that, I include two other weight sessions and two bike sessions to maintain some extra fitness.

What is it like being in Europe, the heartland of football, where the football culture is so alive?

Playing in Europe is fantastic. Football is on the TV and in the papers every day and is a big part of everyone's life. We have played a warm-up game against a Norwegian team and we travel to Sweden on the weekend to play one of their best teams.

Next year there is a European Cup for women's club teams and we have entered our team in that, so I'm really looking forward to that. The standard here is very good. The players here move the ball well, keep the ball well and are more intense at training than in Australia.

Do you follow other football?

It is hard not to follow other European football. The Champions League is on every week and there is Spanish football and English football every week. I follow the Australian football via the internet, so a lot of time is spent following the game.

As a new player, how well have you settled in, and do you look like breaking into the starting eleven?

It took a little time last season (November last year I played the last three games of the season) to get used to the way the team plays. With us going there towards the end of the season, and me playing a new position, I took a little time to learn the way the team played. Now that I have had a couple of months here, I have learnt the system well (3-5-2) and have cemented a spot wide on the left. It involves a lot of running and timing of runs but it is good because it allows me to attack a lot.

The coach, Jens, is a quiet man. There is a lot of intensity in the trainings and he is very knowledgeable of the game. He researches other teams quite well and gives individual feedback each week to us.

Basically I love the football here and I am learning all the time and playing every week against good football teams.

CANADA TO HOST INAUGURAL WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP

FIFA this week awarded hosting rights for the inaugural Women's World Youth Championship to Canada. The Under 19 event will be contested in August/September 2002.

Unsuccessful bidders were Ghana, South Africa, and USA, with Ghana remaining a candidate for the second Championship in 2004.

Unfortunately, there are no details yet regarding the qualification process, nor number of places allocated to each Confederation. Last year, FIFA had decided on a field of twelve nations split into three pools of four, to compete under the format of pool matches, quarterfinals, semis, and finals.

According to preliminary information from the continental Confederations, FIFA estimates around ninety countries will contest the event in the qualifying rounds, illustrating that football is the world women's game.

PROUDEST SOCCER MOMENT

The introduction of women's soccer into the Olympic Games program represents the proudest moment of International Olympic Committee president, said the man himself, Juan Antonio Samaranch, last week.

"I am very proud of that achievement," he was quoted as saying. The occasion was the presentation of the FIFA Order of Merit to Samaranch, who is due to retire from the Olympic presidency in July, a post he has held for twenty years.

Letters to the Editor

Farina's 'Holy Grail' dilemma

Dear Sir,

This is an article from the 'Sunday Mail', Queensland, 18.3.01. Is it true that Mr Farina said all this:

"It (World Cup qualification) has become a bit of a Holy Grail for us," Farina said.

"It's been 28 years since Australia last qualified (1974 in West Germany) for the days and I feel it as a destiny thing for me.

Does he really think he is the "Soccer Messiah" of Australia? Well then he better look out or else he might end up on the Cross!

He should probably recognise that in the past 28 years we were simply not good enough!

Against Iran, in the first-half, we could not put away 3 or 4 more goals. And in the second-half, we were not capable of defending our advantage!

The South Americans are a completely different proposition to playing an Asian team! So Mr. Farina, don't be too optimistic, because it won't just happen out of the thin air, or because we have Viduka & company. You have to work with the team extra hard to qualify!

This is to "ABSW goofs", 13.3.01.

Dear Mr A. Vaccaro, you are not alone in not being replied or printed. Our "chef d'oeuvres", (masterpieces) are being ignored, and I am sure that our writing is finding its way into their garbage bins!!

The reasons for this are: They are not what ABSW thinks, that is the actuality.

The Editor and co-writers like to play "le bras droit de Dieu", (the right arm of the God). They like to judge, and reject what we are writing.

They are afraid that if they print an offensive article then they will be SUED off the skin of their pink bottoms!!!

They behave like amateurs as they should have put in place a watertight system. For example: A driver licence, or any other personal documents photographed, and authenticated by a Justice of Peace, or by a Police constable.

They are not willing to build up any sort of system where we can prove that Mr XYZ is truly is Mr XYZ, and print freely what we may write.

If there is suing then they would be covered.

I think it is very hard to give up the position of being "the right arm of God."

R. Marton,
Tingalpa. Qld.

Wynton Rufer: Football Kingz coach/player.

Thumbs up for the Kingz

Dear Sir,

Was that really a 10,000 plus crowd at the Football Kingz v Marconi match in Auckland? If so it would appear that after many rocky moments the Kingz are winning over NZ's sceptical soccer fraternity.

As I understand the Kingz have previously been averaging about 5,000 people at home which taking into account the team's performance, is encouraging.

Many people here claim with some justification that by allowing a NZ team to play in the NSL Australian Soccer is helping NZ Soccer to improve its standards overall. There is some incidental evidence to suggest that this is already happening.

On the other hand a strong NZ presence in the NSL will enhance the commercial appeal of the NSL meaning more money for Australian Soccer fears that by enhancing NZ Soccer standards this will threaten the Socceroos are somewhat exaggerated.

In NZ, Soccer is predominantly a recreational game played amongst the white middle classes. The working classes, especially the Maoris and Pacific Islanders are devotees of Rugby League and Union.

While this remains the case NZ will not produce many quality players of the calibre of Wynton Rufer.

In closing just as Perth Glory was the best thing to happen to Soccer in WA, perhaps the Kingz will do the same for NZ Soccer in slow motion.

R Melor,
Bondi. NSW.

LABBOZZETTA AND ETHNIC CLUBS

Dear Sir,

To be head of an organisation means you hold responsibilities to all clubs, spectators, players and administrators throughout Australia but when self interests dictate your ideals for the NSL than you compromise your position.

Having read Tony Labbozzetta's plans for the NSL one has to wonder if the years of mediocrity and obscurity the NSL enjoys will continue for years to come.

Considering his position in Club Marconi it is no wonder he doesn't have a problem with clubs maintaining their ethnic identities but surely since his responsibility is to all Australians then he should be encouraging regionalisation of teams and not continual nationalisation.

I, like many others, want a vibrant financially secure NSL compassing all Australians in all cities of Australia without any ethnic ties whatsoever. If that is too hard to deliver then he shouldn't be in the job.

Nothing would give me more pleasure than seeing the NSL played in all cities in front of large crowds and accessible on free to air TV in prime time viewing. You may say its dreaming but look what Kerry Packer did with cricket.

Soccer is just waiting for someone to do the same thing. It just takes someone with vision and passion.

Stephen Predriy,
Newcastle. NSW.

'Give Scullino a rest'

Dear Sir,

This letter is the first such time I have felt compelled to put pen to paper. As a long time reader of ABSW, (or as my circle of friends now call it), "The Dominic Scullino Soccer weekly," I have recently become more and more disillusioned with your paper, and particularly the "Letters to the Editor" section.

Whilst I will always support and defend the rights of free speech in our democracy, the persistent whining emanating from Nerang, Queensland, courtesy of Mr D. Scullino, has recently become an amplified shriek.

Apart from the fact that this writer should be on your payroll as a journalist, such is the frequency of his correspondence, the arguments he drafts in the "Letters" section, border on the ludicrous, driven by his stereotypical view of various clubs.

Lee Sterrey: Newcastle United's coach.

Surely you must value the reputation of your publication. Then why do you allow such tripe to appear on your pages consistently, (amazingly, sometimes more than once per issue), from the same serial letter writer?

Amongst his latest 'rippers' which were reproduced in your 6th March, 2001 issue:

- South Melbourne & Olympic — mono-ethnic Greek clubs, (I thought the respective clubs, their fans, sponsors etc ... all paid taxes in Australia),
- Name changes all round. (to 'embrace' Rugby League fans obviously).

And finally ... the greatest line of the entire piece:

"Newcastle United needs to win more games than they lose, and their supporters will come out in droves."

Why didn't I think of that? Take note Messrs Constantine and Sterrey — that's all you need to do.

Come on ABSW. Respect yoruselves, and your readers, and give this bloke a rest ... PLEASE.

Sam Richards,
Strathfield. NSW.

Dear most valued reader,

ABSW endeavours to give every one of our valued readers the opportunity to express their opinions and point of view. Unfortunately we are bound by the arm of the law and simply can not publish material that is of a defamatory nature. NO newspaper in the world will deliberately print defamatory material, even if it is in the form of a letter to the editor.

The paper has as much responsibility for work sent in by its readers as it does for work done by its journalists. That is the law and unfortunately we can't change it. We therefore plead with our readers to strive for accuracy, keep letters free of malice, brief and straight to the point.

ABSW is a firm believer of providing the Soccer public with a strong voice and we do this through our letters page.

We encourage all of our readers to contribute and share their views on what we believe is the greatest game in the world.

Yours in sport
Editor

The good and bad of the 'blueprint'

Dear Sir,

The "Blue Print for Change" as suggested by Mr Joske at WA in the "ABSW" 20/3/01 has some good, off set by some narrow viewing, at the make up at the NSL in the future.

If population in to be a factor, Sydney with a host at Rugby League and Union taking the Lions share at supporters, backed by extensive media coverage and a population roughly the same as Birmingham in the UK, has five teams in the NSL the aforementioned English City, has one team in the Premier League and two in Division One.

At least three at the Sydney teams should get the chop on the other hand Canberra which despite other cities refereeing to accept, is the capital at this great Southern land and has immense registrations of Junior players it also has a population at roughly 320,000 made cup mainly at people from interstate who where drafted here daring the public service explosion of 30 yrs ago and whose loyalties where either to Aussie Rules and or Rugby League.

While these people register their kids for the World Game because at its no bodily contact they do not take the kids to "Cosmos" games, mainly because at two factors.

The stupid idea at Summer Soccer, the South Coast beaches are more attractive during hot and long summer days and nights, and the fact that Bruce Stadium in a cut lunch and a map reference from the centre at the non ethnic junior explosion as for the corporate dollar sponsorships, like TV and media reports in the ACT.

Rugby League and Union (not a factor in WA) have the pause strains well and truly sporn up. Answer in the view at this writer. Bring the NSL back to what it always should be a winter game, and for the "Cosmos" get off Bruce Stadium, take the game to where the Junior support base is after all these kids are the games.

V. Heath,
Duffy. ACT.

Mouthwatering fixtures

Dear Sir,

I think it's time we turned our attention to the game of Soccer and leave the politics of the game alone for a moment.

Let the politicians of the game settle their differences to that our game can prosper, because if they don't people power might have to settle their differences for them.

I would like to turn our attention to the fantastic football we are about to see in the next mine months of this year. Here is a list of the upcoming events:

1. Oceania World Cup qualifiers in April. 2. NSL finals in May & June. 3. U/20 World Youth Cup. 4. Confederation Cup in June 5. World Cup club champions in July 6. 6. U/17 World Youth Cup in August. 7. The new NSL League starting in October. 8. Finally the World Cup qualifier for the Socceroos in November.

Now thats what I call a fantastic nine months of football for this year coming, lets keep it positive and get behind our teams and the sport in general.

I'm looking forward to seeing our great Aussie fighting spirit on the world stage in all these events. This year is shaping up as very important to Aussie Soccer in many ways so let's use our positive energy to help Soccer bring our country success on the world stage.

Go Aussie!

Paul Bottari,
Yokine, WA.

OFF THE CROSSBAR

By Allan Crisp

The grass, it is said, is always greener on the other side of the fence.

Well, at least that's what 88 South Australian Soccer players appear to believe as they prepare to start the new Premier League and State League seasons on Saturday wearing the strips of former rival clubs.

As ABSW went to press the aforementioned 88 players had changed allegiance from one of 20 Premier League or State League outfits.

Only reigning Premier League champions Blue Eagles and State League clubs Cumberland Foxes, Seaford Surfers and Northern Demons have resisted the temptation to delve into the transfer market.

Pre-season State League championship favourite West Torrens Birkalla was the most prolific purchaser of new talent, recruiting a cool dozen newcomers.

Eight of the new Birkalla boys joined the Camden-based club with previous NSL experience — Anthony Breaden, Frank Tibaldi, John Fusco, Con Kokkinoplitis, Aaron Westervelt, Peter Mihalopoulos, Paul Pezos and Jimmy Tsekinis.

The latter played for West Adelaide Sharks and South Melbourne and is a former Youth Socceroo, while Kokkinoplitis was captain of the Sharks.

Other ex-West Adelaide players, Mike Harkness, Nathan Day, Adrian Iandiorio and Gary Price are shifting camps, along with former Adelaide City champion Steve Maxwell.

Big Maxie has signed for Hills Hawks, Day and Harkness have linked up with Metro Stars; Iandiorio has left Cumberland to join Croydon Kings and Price has vacated Noarlunga to sign for the Panthers.

Price's son Scott has linked up with his father in jumping ship from one southern club to another.

One of the most surprising defections has been the departure from Croydon Kings of Shane Porter, the stalwart former Kings captain, to newly promoted Premier League club Port Pirie City.

Last season's grand final runner-up, Modbury Jets have enlisted Ryan Mitchell from Campbelltown Red Devils and Simon Wegner from Hills Hawks.

Blue Eagles, winner of seven first division titles, should again be a Premier League front runner, along with Modbury, Croydon Kings and promoted Olympic FC, which romped through last season's State League campaign unconquered before winning the grand final.

Birkalla, with its immense depth of talent, should cakewalk through the State League opposition, but conditions could vary greatly when carpet like pitches transform to muddy trenches during the height of winter.

PLAYER TRANSFERS

PREMIER LEAGUE

Blue Eagles: Nil

Adelaide City: Niall Fay (Para Hills), Danielle Lastella (Western Strikers), Adam Carter (Modbury Jets), Owen Filewood (NSW), James Mooney (Victoria), Iain Fyfe (Salisbury Apaches).

Olympic FC: Damien Harley (Port Lion Pirates), Noah Albanese (SASI/Modbury), Nek Galanopoulos (Cumberland).

Campbelltown Red Devils: Laurie Berlingeri (Blue Eagles), Lachlan Campbell (Paramatta Power).

Croydon Kings: Brad Donovan (Playford Patriots), Adrian Iandiorio (Cumberland), Tony Musolino (Adelaide City), Craig Woods (Para Hills), Jim Stavrides (Port Lion).

Metro Stars: Mike Harkness (Adelaide Sharks), Jordan D'arsie (SASI/Adel City), Mark Camelleri (Enfield Falcons), Steve DeGiovanniello (Port Lion), Steve Terefelko (Olympic FC), Nathan Day (Adelaide City), Dino Sordillo (Port Lion).

Modbury Jets: Simon Wegner (Hills Hawks), Ryan Mitchell (Campbelltown).

Playford Patriots: Daniel Mignone (Raiders), Geoff Gillard (RAAF), Theo Anastasiou (Blue Eagles), Tim Crawford (Elizabeth Vale), Damian Dimella (Croydon Kings), Trent Brotherton (Metro Stars), Andrew Gauntlett (Para Hills), Neal Cotgrove (Para Hills).

Jim Tsekenis: Quits Birkalla for Port Lions.

Port Lion Pirates: John Manca (White City), Anthony Kasperski (Croydon Kings), Alex Mechis (Birkalla), Daniele Cirillo (Adel City).

Port Pirie City: Toby Nelson (Port Lion), Shane Porter (Croydon Kings).

Raiders: Joe Blefari (Modbury), Joe Berlingeri (Metro Stars), Chris Nichols (Cumberland), Damian Gagliardi (Cumberland).

White City Woodville: Andy Leane (Cumberland), Simon Mitchell (Campbelltown).

STATE LEAGUE

Cobras: John Ioannou (Olympic).

Hills Hawks: Matthew Bowden (Noarlunga), Adam Dunt (Para Hills), Steve Maxwell (Cumberland), Ben Huybreghts (Birkalla).

Cumberland Foxes: Nil.

Enfield Falcons: Peter Rossi (Panthers), Gianni Lascala (Metro Stars), Luca Mattiazzo (Adel City), Maurice Hewson (Birkalla), Frank Fantasia (Adel City).

Noarlunga United: Matt Sephton (White City).

Panthers: Gerard Clark (Seaford), Paul Cook (Cumberland), John Peppas (Pt. Pirie City), Gary Price (Noarlunga), Scott Price (Noarlunga), Keith Rowling (Cumberland), Ryan Veitch (Noarlunga), Greg Videon (Noarlunga).

Para Hills Knights: Mark Moore (Enfield), Adrian DiLorenzo (Birkalla), Peter Waine (Port Pirie City), Mark Kelly (Salisbury Utd), Darren Jones (Croydon), Shaun Plummer (Birkalla), Michael Keens (Birkalla).

Salisbury United: Mark Beck (Para Hills West), Mathew Blackwood (Northern Demons).

Seaford Surfers: Nil.

Western Strikers: Lucky Paicos (Olympic), Luke Tsimopoulos (Olympic).

Branko Milosevic: Olympic FC's coach.

Birkalla: Anthony Breaden (Brisbane Lions), Frank Tibaldi (Western Strikers), John Fusco (Adel City), Greg Hagias (Panachaiki, Greece), Con Kokkinoplitis (Blue Eagles), Aaron Westervelt (Playford Patriots), Daniel Ferriera (White City), Dustie McGregor (Adel City), Peter Mihalopoulos (Port Lion), Paul Pezos (Metro Stars), Damian Stam (White City), Jimmy Tsekinis (Port Lion).

THE COACHES

PREMIER LEAGUE

Blue Eagles: Zoran Karadzic.
Adelaide City: Neville Flounders.
Olympic FC: Branko Milosevic.
Campbelltown City: Jan Kierno.
Croydon Kings: Phil Scardigno.
Metro Stars: Mario Boffa.
Modbury Jets: Duane Gray.
Playford Patriots: Alby Kidd.
Port Lion Pirates: Greg Kalinovic.
Port Pirie City: John Christopoulos.
Raiders: Rocky Aloisi.
White City Warriors: Milan Ivanovic.

STATE LEAGUE

Cobras: Manuel Lopez.
Hills Hawks: Craig Leith.
Cumberland Foxes: Richard Preston.
Enfield Falcons: Tony LaScalla.
Noarlunga Bulldogs: David Leane.
Northern Demons: Rick Cerracchio.
Panthers: Gary Price.
Para Hills: Greg Mills.
Salisbury Apaches: Ray Deeley.
Seaford Surfers: Trevor Jenkinson.
Western Strikers: Nick Patsaras.
Birkalla: Zoran Maricic.

Allan Crisp can be heard on the Marshall Thompson Homes Pacific Real Estate 5RPH (1197AM) Breakfast Soccer Show each Tuesday from 7.30am-9am, along with Croydon Kings coach Phil Scardigno, Channel 10 Sports Reporter Robbie Popplestone, Peter Millar, The Advertiser Soccer writer Meno Toutsidis and former Australian international John Perin.

Hostile fans upset Souths, Knights

Mickey Petersen South Melbourne coach.

When a coach contends parochial support is worth a goal or a point for the home side, he's not kidding. It can will a Davis Cup team to ace the opposition or push an athlete to win an Olympic medal. India's test cricket victory over Australia had as much to do with the relentless, home crowd support as it had to do with superior play.

In soccer, the boys on the hill or member terraces can make life hell for visiting teams. Heaven knows the trip to Perth Glory is no picnic but worse than purgatory.

Sadly, on Melbourne soccer grounds the call is often an embarrassing silence or worse, a howl of scorn when the need is most pressing - when the home team is down and needs a lift.

At the Melbourne Knights and South Melbourne the barometer of support runs concurrently with success. The Mark Viduka grandstand is a hot bed of derision when the Knights are struggling.

Players are given the raspberry when they need encouragement. The "Croatia, Croatia!" chant roars from the terraces only when the Knights are winning - when, in fact, they are not gasping for it.

At home, Knights supporters are a mob the players fear more than the opposition. The wrath of the grandstand works against the Knights.

Consequently, they tend to play better football away than at home.

In a tight run towards the national league finals, the Knights need all the home support they can get. Vanis and his players have the

By Bert van Bedaf

belief they can consolidate sixth or fifth position, "if the crowd gets behind us", he added.

At South Melbourne, supports have taken to abuse. An incident earlier in the season prompted coach Mike Petersen to remark on South's supporters, "They want to win with us, but they don't want to lose with us."

The message cannot have hit home that time. During the dour 1-0 win over Canberra a few rounds ago the chant went up "Boring, boring", which provoked both Petersen and assistant coach Jeff Oliver to turn to the members stand and have an altercation with a group of unsporting fans.

During the after-match conference Petersen made a deliberate point of referring to the incident.

"I would like to say one thing though and that might be a bit controversial. I get to see our crowd and again, if this club has any aspirations to being a Manchester United our supporters got to toe the line. I'll say it again, they want to win with us, but they don't want to lose with us," said Petersen, who has been a player, assistant coach and now senior coach of South for more than decade.

"That puts pressure on the players as well. It's not only the frustration of playing a team that sits back (and defends), but also supporters who are really unsupportive in my opinion.

"It gets to the whole group. I'm not the type to just sit there. I'd like to say how I feel.

"It might be a cauldron on the park, but off the park we're certainly letting South Melbourne football club down (by) so-called members, who support the club. If that's what they call support, it's disappointing when it's from our own.

"I cannot call them our own. They might as well put on a Canberra or Wollongong scarf, when they come down to Bob Jane (stadium).

"They seem to sit in the South Melbourne members (stand) and think they support the club, but it's got me beat. I don't quite get it. I've been putting up with it for 15 years, but it certainly takes on a different emotion when you're on the bench," he said.

Melbourne saw Carlton drop out of the NSL and Victoria is about to lose Eastern Pride from the national soccer league. Lack of finances was not the only cause of past and pending demise. Lack of support also contributed.

The Knights and South have survived because they've been able to demonstrate a regular supporter base. Now it's time those supporters express their passion for their clubs by barracking not only when the team is on a roll, but also when it is falling behind.

It shows the real spirit of true fans in any sporting environment, whether it is tennis, cricket, Australian Rules or soccer

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE 1
WOLLONGONG WOLVES 1

Aurelio Vidmar: Tied the game for Adelaide City.

By Allan Crisp

It was the calm after the goal storm for Adelaide City and Wollongong Wolves when they shared the points in this rescheduled round 15 clash at Hindmarsh Stadium last Sunday afternoon.

The previous week the Wolves had figured in a head-spinning 9-4 win over Newcastle, while the Force crashed 4-6 to Perth Glory in another goal-a-thon.

This result failed to enhance NSL champion Wollongong's chances of finishing in the top two, but the point gathered by City, plus the three charity points from the Carlton bye, boosted the home team's hopes of making the play-offs.

Match statistics showed that Wollongong had twice as many shots on goal than the Force and that they steered 10 attempts on target compared to four by the home side.

However, the vital stats came in the 23rd minute from Robbie Middleby when the tough — as-teak performer accepted a pass from Stuart Young to race into the box and slot past Adrian Cagalj in the City goal, before Aurelio Vidmar levelled for City four minutes later with a superbly struck free kick from the edge of the penalty area.

The captain's goal came as a result of a foul by former Adelaide midfielder Dino Mennillo on City's Italian import Claudio Pelosi.

Vidmar starred as sweeper in a recast City defence which housed young Kristian Rees as central defensive partner to Ante Kovacevic, while starting line-up men from last week, Louis Brain and Ivan Karlovic, along with squad discard, Fabrizio Buccharelli, were replaced by Rees, Lucas Pantelis and David Terminello.

Wollongong had just one change from its previous outing with ace Scott Chipperfield ousted through suspension for two matches and likely to be absent for more games when called up for national duty.

The Wolves also will miss defender George Souris sidelined through suspension aftr his 37th minute booking.

City coach Zoran Matic did his home work admirably when spying on Wollongong when it lost by a goal to South Melbourne on Friday night.

Unflappable Wolves coach Ron Corry, without the aid of statistical information, suggested that, "We dominated most of the game, but they had plenty of bodies behind the ball."

Matic's response was equally accurate. "We played a good team, but we should hav had more courage in certain areas."

Key players, Pelosi (City) was carried off with a knee injury, while Middleby (Wolves) limped off suffering from a recurring foot problem.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 2
FOOTBALL KINGZ 2

By Bert Van Bedaf

The Football Kingz came twice from behind to draw 2-2 with the Melbourne Knights at Somers St last Sunday for the second time this season, while the home time felt robbed of a penalty in stoppage time.

Knights midfielder Lubo Lapsansky looked like being fouled inside the box, but referee Perry Mur did not award a penalty much to the ire of the crowd and the surprise of Kingz assistant coach Shane Rufer.

"We've seen a open game of football and in the end we were lucky not to concede a penalty. It could well have been a penalty," Rufer said of the push on Lapsansky by substitute Gerard Davis.

Knights coach Vlado Vanis commented, "Lubo (Lapsansky) is still crying over it in the dressing room, but the decision of the referee is final."

Melbourne Knights Joel Porter screams following a tackle on him by a Kingz defender.

The draw did neither team much good in their bid to make the finals, although it did the Knights less harm. They added another point to their top six tally, clinging to sixth spot ahead of Sydney United on goal difference, while a Kingz berth now looks remote with six home-and-away rounds left in the competition.

"Their (Knights) chances are 80 per cent higher than ours to qualify for the top six. We have been playing consistently good football in the last few week, but we're lacking (a certain) ruthlessness in of of goal. We'll keep playing for it, but it's got to be very difficult. We'll need to win (all) six games," Rufer said.

The Knights now have extracted only two points from a possible nine in their last three matches and are in danger of slipping out of sixth place.

"It is very disappointing, but we have nothing to lose and everything to win. Twelve more points (three home wins, including the Carlton bye, and three away draws) should be enough for us," Vanis said about his finals chances.

It was the third time the two sides drew out of four encounters. Other matches ended up in 3-3 (last season) and 2-2 (this season), while the Knights beat the Kingz 4-0 at home last season.

The Knights struck their opening goal in the 12th minute. Daniel Vasilevski ran the ball into the box and appeared to be brought down. The ball fell for Joel Porter who crossed it over the Kingz defence to the left, where Joe Rajher blasted it home.

But the Kingz struck back six minutes later when Dennis Ibrahim glanced a header into the net from an Aaran Lines free-kick. The ball landed beyond the outstretched body of Knights 'keeper Lou Acevski at the far post to stun the crowd.

The Kingz defended in numbers and were fast on the counter, while Lines was effective from free-kicks.

Pelikan got the Knights back in front with a one-touch from an Ivan Jolic cross in the 54th minute. But the Kingz were almost level 30 seconds later when Urlovic had a close range shot that bounced of Acevski for a corner.

The Knights should have sealed the came in the 67th minute when a long through-ball drew Cuello way out of his goal, but the Kingz 'keeper beat Pelikan to the ball and pushed it further up field. Lapsansky put it straight back, giving Porter a perfect opportunity to lob Cuello. But the Knights striker hit the ball well wide of the near post.

The Kingz levelled in the 73rd minute with a scorcher of a free-kick by Lines. The ball hit the staunchion so hard when it cannoned back into play it looked like it had hit the post.

PARRAMATTA POWER 3
SYDNEY OLYMPIC 1

By Arvind Hickman

The Parramatta Power have found some late season form after an impressive 3-1 victory over local rivals Sydney Olympic at Parramatta Stadium last Sunday.

The performance made all the more remarkable as the Power were reduced to ten men early in the second half after Peter Bennett allegedly swore at a linesman.

The Power played some inspired and totally committed football, making their much higher placed opponents look very ordinary.

Olympic were more dominant at the start of the game but started to loose their way after twenty minutes. Parramatta capitalised on this momentum swing and Peter Bennett sent the home team a goal up in the 26th minute.

Bennett's rasping drive from 30metres out took a slight deflection and pocketed in the right hand corner leaving 'keeper Clint Bolton with very little chance.

Andrew Crews made an important save for the home team when Lindsay Wilson played Pablo Cardozo through. Crews stretched out to thwart the Olympic striker who only had the ëkeeper to beat from an angle.

Power's second goal came on the stroke of half-time and was easily the move of the match. A brilliant through ball by David Barrett found Matthew Thompson on the right flank, who then played a low cross into the path of Luke Roodenburg. The 19 year old made no mistake with his finish riffling the ball into the net just inside the near post.

The second half started horrendously for the home side with Bennett being sent off for dissent after only ten minutes.

However, it was Parramatta who to score next from a counter attack in the 67th minute.

Milan Blagojevic played a long ball across the park onto Ahmad Elrich's flank. The wingback pounced on the ball after a failed headed clearance by the last defender and then lobbed the ball around the advancing Bolton.

Olympic grabbed back a late equaliser through some fancy footwork from Cardozo but it was too little too late.

Power Coach, David Mitchell, was pleased with the win but annoyed that this form wasn't produced earlier in the season.

"The commitment and determination was there today but it's annoying because Olympic are one of the best teams and we did it comfortably. It's a pity we couldn't play like that all season," he said.

Sydney Olympic Coach, Branko Cullina, was not impressed with his chargers commitement and sense of urgency.

"Considering the importance of the game we didn't do enough or prepare enough and got what we deserved. It's a good wake up call, not what we wanted and it's dented our ego's a little bit," he said.

Olympic still hold onto second place but are now only one point ahead of the Wollongong Wolves. The Power will have little if any chance of making the finals but have shown the sort of promise that may auger well for next season.

PIC. C. PAPAPOPOULOS

Sydney Olympic's left wingback, Elias Augerinos, (left) attempts to stop Parramatta's Ahmad Elrich who was man-of-the-match.

BRISBANE STRIKERS 3
EASTERN PRIDE 1

By Glenn Davis

Where there's life there's hope, that's the simple message Brisbane Strikers will take away from their 3-1 win over Eastern Pride at Ballymore on Sunday night.

The Strikers have probably played ten times better and lost on past occasions, but in the final analysis, coach John Kosmina's faint hopes of making the final six still flicker with the valuable three pointer.

Kosmina and the Strikers still believe in themselves, which is the most important ingredient if they are to accomplish the feat which requires winning their remaining six games, including a guaranteed three pointer for the Carlton bye.

It was not a classic match, but the Strikers dominated totally in the early part of the first half before allowing the visitors back into the game after the break when Pride trailed 2-0.

The financially-strapped Victorians found themselves on the back foot after only six minutes when Strikers Peter Buljan scored.

Buljan, one of three new faces in the Strikers starting line up, notched his third goal since leaving his former club Perth Glory for Brisbane in January.

Buljan, who came into the side for suspended forward Jeromy Harris, headed home from close range to finish off a superb cross from Chay Hews.

The Strikers led 2-0 at the break after Paul Foster made no mistake with a 24th minute penalty.

Adelaide referee Craig Zetter pointed to the spot after Eastern Pride keeper Eugene Galekovic brought down Strikers' defender Nick Meredith on the side of the penalty area.

The Strikers could have doubled their half-time lead in the closing minutes but Foster was narrowly off target with one attempt while Brazillian Fernando Rech grazed the upright from 20 metres.

Peter Buljan: Struck again to ensure victory for Brisbane.

Eastern Pride took the game to the home-side after the break and had several near chances before their perserverence was eventually rewarded.

The second half was only nine minutes old when midfielder Robbie Puca fired a cross into the box for defender Dean Fak who headed home at the far post to reduce the Strikers lead to 2-1.

Eastern Pride toiled hard in the humid conditions and looked a hope of forcing a draw until a tragic error from Galekovic in goal.

Galekovic rushed out to clear a cross from Strikers' defender Jon McKain only to watch his attempted punch deflect backwards over his head into the net.

Despite last week's loss to Sydney Olympic, the Strikers have been in good form with strong wins over Sydney United and South Melbourne earlier this month.

The Strikers have a horror record on the road and have two away games before the end of the season against Auckland Kingz next round and Adelaide Force on Easter Sunday.

These two games could well decide if the Strikers can do the impossible and making the play-offs although other results may need to go their way.

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 0
SOUTH MELBOURNE 1

By Arvind Hickman

League leaders South Melbourne have scored a gutsy 1-0 victory to defeat title contenders Wollongong in front of a 8,483 strong crowd at WIN Stadium last Friday night.

South showed why they are the best defensive unit in the NSL by soaking up eighty minutes of intense pressure before delivering the crucial blow via inspirational skipper Paul Trimboli.

Wollongong dominated a majority of possession and had countless opportunities but couldn't break down the five man South Melbourne defence.

South bodies were being thrown left, right and centre, in a gutsy and determined defensive effort that left goalkeeper Michael Petkovic with a couple of meaningful saves in the whole match.

The Wolves, on the other hand, rarely had to retreat into their own half, but made too many tactical mistakes up-front by consistently playing crosses that were bread and butter for the blue back five.

Wollongong Coach, Ron Corry, was disappointed by what he felt was a lapse in concentration from his team's rear guard.

"It's just a lack of concentration and discipline that cost us today. All season from corners and free kicks we seem to drift off and players forget to do their jobs," he said.

"We did enough to win the game but maybe we scored too many goals last week.

But that's why they are on top because they scramble and defend so well."

South Melbourne's Assistant Coach, Jeff Oliver, admitted to implementing a more defensive approach for this game.

"I thought it was a good top of the table clash. We probably compensated our attacking game for theirs a little bit but we knew that if we could survive the first 20-25 minutes we could get back into the game," he said.

Wollongong started the game with the same momentum as their previous encounter by dominating play from the outset.

Stuart Young was the first to force Michael Petkovic into a tricky save after his sweetly hit volley bounced just before the South 'keeper.

Con Boutsianis was the only South Melbourne player to trouble the Wollongong goal in the first half with two stunning free-kicks from the edge of thepenalty area.

Paul Reid then appeared to be felled in the penalty box after touching the ball through but referee Mark Shield instead ruled for a corner.

Stuart Young again forced Petkovic into a smart diving save when his free-kick swerved through a crowded box.

The Wolves started off the second half where they left off the first but it almost took a South mistake to give Wollongong a lead.

Robert Middleby, having a fine game, made an intricate run down the left flank before crossing a teasing ball which Fausto De Amicis almost chested into his own net. Petkovic made a diving save to keep the scoreline blank.

Paul Reid and Saso Petrovski had a couple more chances before captain courageous, Paul Trimboli, scored South Melbourne's winning goal in the 82nd minute.

Andy Vlahos produced a well measured corner and Trimboli climbed above the rest to angle his header between Anastasiadis and Reid on the post.

While Wollongong dominated a lot of the attacking possession, Souths' defence have clearly stamped their authority on the NSL title and they now retain first place. The Wolves still hold onto third position after Perth Glory slipped up in Newcastle.

Simon Colosimo (right), South Melbourne tireless sweeper, who frustrated Wollongong Wolves attackers from scoring.

NEWCASTLE UNITED 1
PERTH GLORY 0

Newcastle United ended Perth Gloryis 12-game unbeaten run on Friday night with a hard fought 1-0 win at Marathon Stadium, to considerably erase memories of their disgraceful capitulation to Wollongong Wolves, the previous weekend.

Perth remain winless in Newcastle after the Novacastrians dug deep to grind out a massive turnaround from their 9-4 flogging by the Wollongong Wolves last week.

Marathon Stadium resembled a patchwork quilt after extensive surface repairs earlier in the month, something not lost on Glory coach Bernd Stange. "It (a loss) must come at some time but that was not soccer tonight," Stange said.

If we offer such a pitch in the national soccer league, it's just not good enough."

United broke a 0-0 halftime deadlock ten minutes after the break,when hardworking defender Todd McManus cleaned up the scraps of a John Buonavoglia shot that was deflected by Perth custodian Jason Petkovic.

United skipper Glenn Sprod had crossed from deep on the left to the far right of the penalty area with Buonavoglia slamming the ball towards the near post only for Petkovic to parry it away.

But it was all in vain as McManus weaved-in to coolly slotted the ball past the keeper for the only goal of the night.

Five minutes earlier Sprod was denied by Petkovic when his left foot shot was punched away by the Perth keeper.

Perth strung together some promising raids on the homeside's goal in an effort to equalise, only to be denied by the agility and cat-like reflexes of veteran keeper Bob Catlin and a defensive backline marshalled by McManus.

In the 67th minute a blistering Damian Mori free kick from the edge of the box almost levelled scores for unrelenting Glory, but Catlin collected the ball safely to avert danger. Several minutes later he was again called upon to steer away a Mori header off a Bobby Despotovski cross from close range.

Newcastle coach Lee Sterrey, after being informed by his club earlier in the week that he would not be required next year, called upon his chargers to be a bit more physical and committed.

The result however came at a costly price, with his side receiving six yellow cards and a send-off in injury time. Defender Andy Roberts and striker Daniel McBreen will miss next week's away match with South Melbourne.

Roberts picked up his fourth yellow card of the season while McBreen was cautioned twice, the second offence incurring a mandatory red card and a week on the sideline.

Perth are now holding their tongue in their cheek as regards the season's future of defender Robert Trajkovski after he was carried off in the 24th minute with what looked like a serious ankle injury.

Todd McManus: Newcastle's match-winning hero.

MARCONI STALLIONS 0
NORTHERN SPIRIT 0

By Joe Russo

Man of the match, Paul Henderson, the Northern Spirit goalkeeper extended a leg in the 90th minute to deny Marconi's Royce Brownlie a goal that would have given the home side the full compliment of points at Marconi Stadium.

However, as a game it was a real lack-lustre affair that never rose to any great heights and the 0-0 draw was a fitting scoreline for a game so devoid of action.

Marconi may have had marginally the better of play in the second half but apart from only the occasional goalmouth action were the nearly 5 000 spectators spared from total boredom.

A great shot from 30 metres in the 29th minute from Marconi's Korean defender Kim saw Henderson pull off a great save.

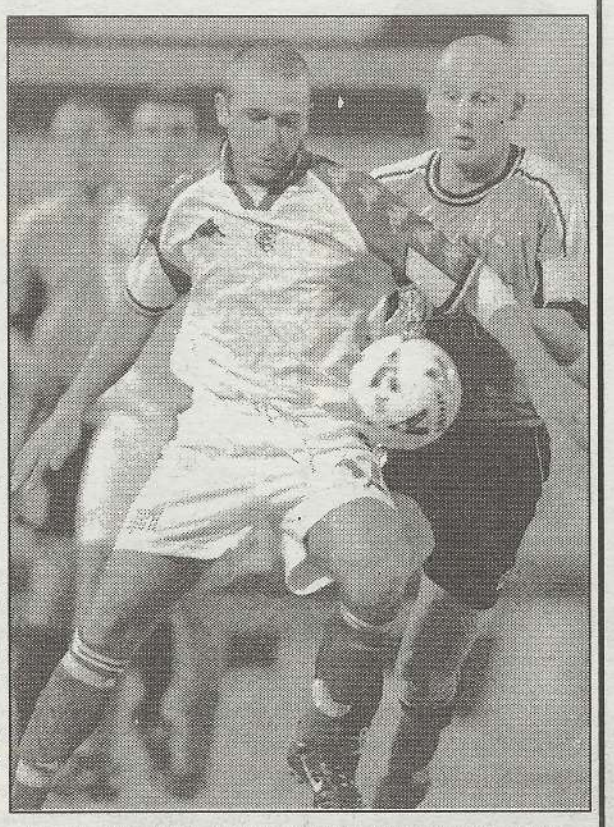
Six minutes later a free kick from Vlado Zoric was well turned over the crossbar from Henderson. However, from the resulting corner, spilt by Henderson, a Kris Trajanovski shot was cleared off the line by the two Matthews: Bingley and Langdon acting in tandem.

In the second half in the 51st minute Dominic Longo sliding back in defence saved the Stallions from embarrassment.

A long-range shot from Gibson in the 63rd minute was well saved by Henderson and in the 70th minute Lee Feeney's volley from outside the box hit the crossbar.

On the whole it was a poor game and the one point for Marconi, while being useful, was certainly not appreciated as much as the full three points could have been.

Northern Spirit, playing only for pride, can console themselves if they managed in the long-run to put a spanner in the works of one of their great rivals' top six aspirations.



Lee Feeney (left), Northern Spirit striker tussles with Marconi Stallions skipper and defender Dominic Longo.

CANBERRA COSMOS 1
SYDNEY UNITED 2

By Graham Cooke

Sydney United firmly established themselves on the winning way, while Canberra Cosmos rediscovered some of their former bad habits in a match that lacked form or inspiration until well into the second half.

On several occasions Canberra coach Mike Milovanovic was seen to spread his arms wide — a gesture which could have signified frustration or despair at the way his team will suddenly waste a match-full of gritty endeavor with a few moments of casual stupidity.

The curse stuck early at Bruce Stadium on Saturday night. After four minutes, United probed forward, the Cosmos fell back in good order and Tom Pondeljak sent a routine cross into the penalty area.

It could and should have been dealt with; instead Cummins Menapi rose in splendid isolation to direct a header past Angelo Konstantinou into the back of the net.

The damage ought to have been restored by Mark Hagger six minutes later, but the Cosmos striker, with the ball at his feet and Brett Hughes scrambling about on the ground, directed a friendly shot straight at the surprised and grateful goalkeeper.

And if there were lessons to be learned on defending decisively under pressure, it was United's Paul Bilokapic who was handing them out, typically clearing the line when challenged by Hagger following a corner.

The game appeared to be drifting towards an inevitable conclusion after the 50th minute when a bizarre moment of folly gave United their second goal. Again the move stemmed from Pondeljak, and again he must have been amazed at the ease with which he contributed to the success.

This time the cross seemed destined for Konstantinou but, under no pressure, the goalkeeper appeared to stumble and drop the ball, allowing Francis Awaratefe a free run to touch it into an unguarded net.

The curtain appeared to be falling, but as has been the case before, Milton Cortes almost stole the final scene. Introduced to the game in the 65th minute, he was on the spot when a cross from David Arranz was headed on to him from Alex Castro.

The little Uruguayan is better known for his twinkling footwork, but his head did not let the fans down and the home side had reason to hope.

There might have been a different ending, especially as United coach Velimir Kupresak chose to make substitutions aimed at defending the lead rather than adding to it. In a hectic finale Castro's shot was scrambled away and Aytec Genc headed a goal-bound ball off the line.

For Kupresak, the once impossible dream of a place in the top six is increasingly taking on the hard edges of reality. "We still have a lot of work to do, but the players are showing great character and I am proud of what they are achieving," he said afterwards.

Milovanovic preferred to dwell on the positives: the Cortes-inspired second-half recovery, and the performance of his youngsters one of whom, Daniel Aliffi, was having his first start in the NSL.

Francis Awaritefe: Scored the winner for Sydney United.

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE

SOUTHERN DIVISION - RD 22

LEADING SCORERS

Name	Team	Goals
Steve Manceski	South Melbourne	26
Nick Waite	Carlton Peninsula Blues	14
Denis Mustac	Eastern Pride	13
Dimitri Tsiaras	South Melbourne	12
Veton Korcarevski	South Dandenong	11
Brett Cunningham	Fawkner Blues	10
Robert Dolevski	Preston Lions	10
Aref El Dib	South Melb Eagles Ac	10
Carlo Melina	Carlton Peninsula Blues	9
Viktor Memeti	South Dandenong	9

Preston Lions 1
Eastern Pride 1

Eastern Pride's hopes of the minor premiership were dented by a last minute goal from Preston Lions' Robert Dolevski resulting in a one-all draw at Connor Reserve on Saturday.

Earlier Milos Petrevski had put the Pride in front in 44 minutes and it seemed that the single goal would be enough to keep the Pride on top. Best for Preston were Dolevski, Pece Dimovski, keeper Goran Petrovski and full back Con Stojanov. South Melboure thus continues to lead the league even though it did not have a match this weekend.

LEAGUE LADDER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Melb. Institute	19	17	0	2	63	21	51
Eastern Pride	20	16	2	2	62	12	50
VIS	22	12	4	6	54	35	40
Melbourne Knights	19	12	1	6	52	22	37
Peninsula Blues	18	11	1	6	47	27	34
Melb Knights Academy	18	9	1	8	24	25	28
South Dandenong	18	8	3	7	35	31	27
South Melb Eagles Acd	19	7	2	10	29	41	23
Green Gully	19	6	4	9	27	35	22
Albury-Wodonga	19	3	4	12	17	50	13
Bulleen Zebras	19	3	4	12	25	56	13
Fawkner Blues	19	3	1	15	24	62	10
Preston Lions	19	3	1	15	21	92	10

Fawkner Blues 2
Green Gully 4

Green Gully had a four-two away win over Fawkner Blues at Smith Reserve also on Saturday.

Imran Balla's goal in 17 minutes put Gully in front, but Ross Lagana equalised just before half-time. Jack

Tountas got the first of his two goals in 57 minutes to restore the Gully's lead, but once again Fawkner got on terms, this time through Michael Cimino. Trent Waterson scored after 76 minutes and this time Tountas followed up with his second goal in 87 as the Blues were caught pressing forward.

Melbourne Knights1
VIS 1

Melbourne Knights and the VIS shared the points in a high quality one-all draw at Knights Stadium on Sunday.

The match flowed from end to end with the Knights taking the lead just after the interval through Jasmin Sehic. Frank Lagana equalized for the VIS in 68 minutes, but then blotted his copybook by getting a second yellow card in 81 minutes.

This was the VIS's last match for a couple of weeks as it heads for Malaysia on 3 April for a series of matches against the national Under-16, 17 and 18 teams.

South Dandenong 4
South Melbourne 2

South Dandenong put in one of its best performances of the season, according to coach Goran Runje, to overcome a spirited South Melbourne Eagles Academy by four goals to two.

Mentor Memeti's penalty for South Dandenong was the only score of a tight first half, but then Felice Denitis equalized for the Academy early in the second when the Dandenong keeper blundered.

Now South Dandenong began to get some reward for its outfield play as Jeremy Kaczmarski with two goals and Veton Korcarevski took it to four-one. Mario Kalakias pulled a goal back for the Academy late in the second half.

Bulleen Zebras is scheduled to play Melbourne Knights Academy on Wednesday at 7 pm, but at time of writing the venue was to be determined. Albury Wodonga, Peninsula Blues and South Melbourne had byes.

ROUND 21 RESULTS

MONDAY 19 MARCH 2001
South Melbourne 6
(Tsiaras 2, 35, 24, Pace 32, Kalogeracos 28, 64)
Peninsula Blues 1
(Elvin 55)

SATURDAY 24 MARCH 2001
Fawkner Blues 2
(R. Lagana 44, Cimino 63)
Green Gully 4
(Balla 17, Tountas 57, 88, Waterson 76)

Preston Lions 1
(Dolevski 90)
Eastern Pride 1
(Petrevski 44)

SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2001
Melbourne Knights 1
(Sehic 46)
VIS 1
(F. Lagana 68)
South Dandenong* 4
(Kaczmarski 2, M. Memeti, V. Korcarevski)
South Melbourne Eagles Academy* 2
(Denittis, Kalakias)

WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2001
— 7:00pm Veneto Club
Bulleen Zebras v Melbourne Knights Academy
BYE — Albury Wodonga
BYE — Peninsula Blues
BYE — South Melbourne

ROUND 23 FIXTURES

FRIDAY 30 MARCH 2001
Melbourne Knights Academy v Peninsula Blues, (Knights Stadium, 7 pm)

SATURDAY 31 MARCH 2001
Eastern Pride v Bulleen Zebras, (Mobil Park, 4 pm)

Green Gully v Melbourne Knights, (Green Gully Reserve, 5 pm)

VIS 6 PRESTON LIONS 0
(Already played, 10 March 2001)

SUNDAY 1 APRIL 2001
Albury-Wodonga v Fawkner Blues, (Myrtleford, 4 pm)

MONDAY 2 APRIL 2001
South Melbourne v South Dandenong, (Bob Jane Stadium, 7 pm)

Bye v South Melbourne Eagles Academy

NORTHERN DIVISION - RD 24

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Name	Club	Goals
Martin Tallan	AIS	18
Gulessarian Kevo	Marconi Stallions	15
Brosque Alex	Marconi Stallions /AIS	13
Ivanic Paul	Canberra Cosmos	12
Austin Liam	Wollongong Wolves	11
Santalab Brendan	Parramatta Power	11
Majurovski John	Northern Spirit	10
Haliti Labinot	Sydney Olympic Academy	9

ROUND 24 RESULTS

FRIDAY 23 MARCH 2001
Wollongong Wolves 1
(P. O'Grady 19)
Marconi Stallions Colts 1
(Tavouktsis 57)

Newcastle United Youth * 6
ACT Academy * 0

Canberra Cosmos 1
(Lee 67)
Sydney United 0

Parramatta Power 1
(Thorp 5)
Sydney Olympic Youth 1
(Demourtzidis 47)

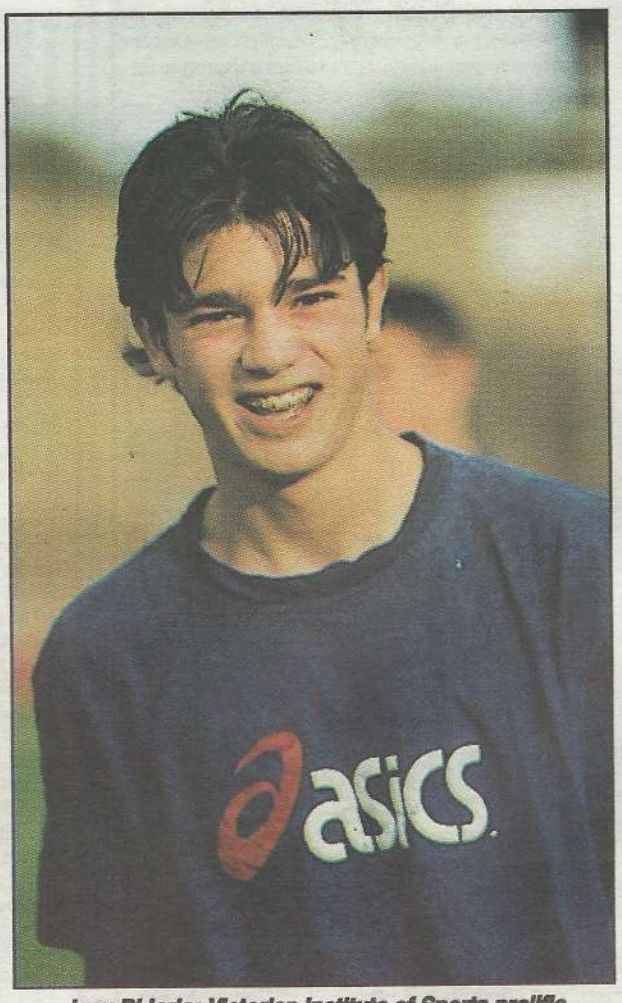
SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2001
Sydney Olympic Academy 5
(Palmer 35, Moustakas 46, Agic 51, Haliti 55, 78)
NSWIS 1
(Hartge 86)

Marconi Stallions Youth 3
(Tome 23, Last 35, 58)
Northern Spirit 2
(MacRae 36)

QAS 1
(Hilton 80)
Newcastle United Colts 0
Bye — AIS

Match Brought Forward from Round 29 — To be played on Wed 28/03/01 6:30pm Valentine Sports Park

NSWIS Marconi Stallions Colts



Joey Di Iorio: Victorian Institute of Sports prolific playmaker.

ROUND 25 FIXTURES

Sun NSWIS Vs QAS 4:00pm Valentine Sports Park
Sat Sydney United Vs Wollongong Wolves 4:00pm Sydney United Sports Centre
Sat Northern Spirit Vs Sydney Olympic Academy 4:00pm Christie Park
Sat AIS Vs Marconi Stallions Youth 7:00pm AIS Soccer Field
Sun Marconi Stallions Colts Vs Newcastle United Youth 5:00pm Marconi Stadium
SunVs Canberra Cosmos 4:00pm Belmore Sports Ground
SunVs Parramatta Power 3:00pm Ray Watt Oval
Bye - ACT Academy
Bye - Sydney Olympic Youth
Bye - Newcastle United Colts

LEAGUE LADDER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
A.I.S.	23	19	3	1	66	24	60
Marconi Stallions	20	14	2	4	51	16	45
Parramatta Power	22	14	3	5	61	31	45
Wollongong Wolves	22	11	6	5	46	24	39
Newcastle United	21	12	3	6	45	24	39
Northern Spirit	22	12	3	7	48	32	39
Q.A.S.	24	11	1	12	38	54	34
Marconi Stallions Colts	20	10	1	9	43	34	31
Sydney Olympic	21	9	4	8	47	41	31
N.S.W.I.S.	24	9	3	12	32	53	30
Sydney United	23	9	1	13	40	44	28
Canberra Cosmos	22	8	3	11	43	42	27
Sydney Olympic Aca	23	4	5	14	35	52	17
Newcastle United Colts	21	2	0	18	12	59	6
ACT Academy	23	1	2	20	11	85	5

Olympic's Must-Win Game

By John Economos

Sydney Olympic on Sunday takes on the Canberra Cosmos at the Belmore Sports Ground in a must win clash if Olympic desires to stay close to League leaders South Melbourne.

Sunday's main game will kick off at 5 pm, not at the normal timeslot of 6.30pm. The Youth League match will start at 2.30pm

Following last Sunday's shock 3-1 loss to the Parramatta Power, Olympic's disappointed coach Branko Culina stated: "It was a wake-up call that we didn't want.

"Parramatta has now beaten us twice this season which has dented our egos.

Branko Culina: Olympic's coach.

Jon Angelucci: Canberra's block-busting striker.

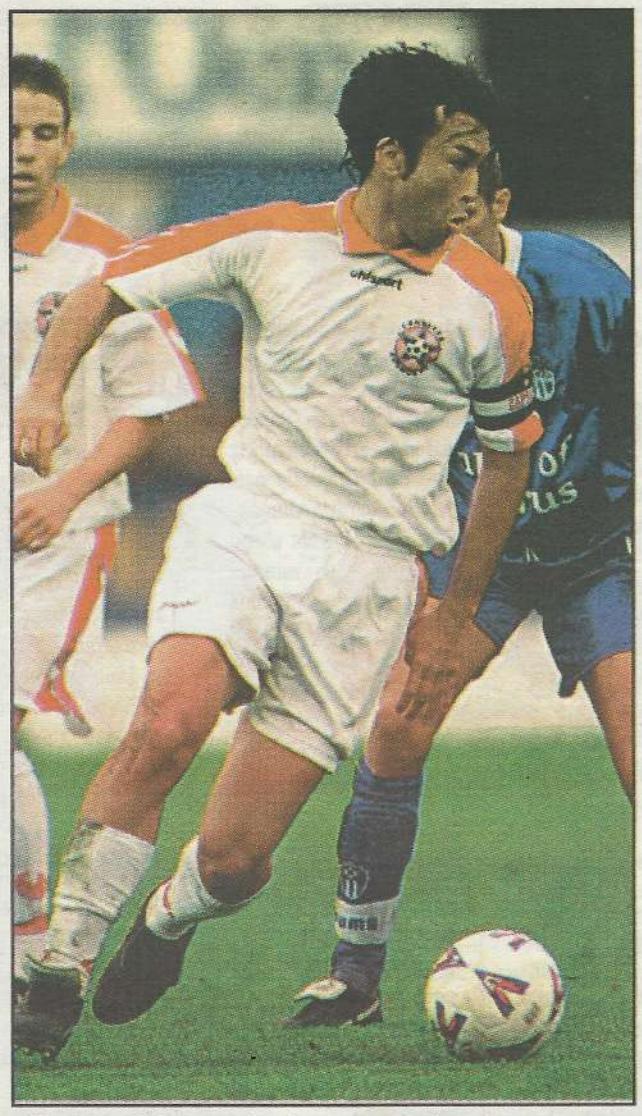
"Last Sunday we had a very good chance to cement a Top 2 spot on the ladder and blew it," Culina lamented.

The Olympic coach then added: "This game on Sunday against Canberra has now become a 'must win' situation."

Olympic last Sunday lost all of its attacking fluency and rhythm after the Power had drawn first blood, and in fact by halftime when the Power had stretched its lead to 2-0, Olympic looked lame.

Much of Olympic's previous penetration and thrust that would come through right wingback, Lindsay Wilson, was blunted by solid flank defending by the Power.

Compounding the team's woes last Sunday was the failure by the Olympic midfielders to be competitive.



Hiroshima Miyazawa: Canberra Cosmos' quality sweeper or central marker from Japan.

Olympic's twin playmakers, Troy Halpin and Kresimir Marusic were quickly denied space to operate by the Power midfielders.

Meanwhile Canberra Cosmos also lost their match last week-end, going down 1-2 to a revitalised Sydney United last Saturday night at the Bruce Stadium.

Canberra's second half substitute, the skilled Uruguayan mini-midfielder, Milton Cortes, scored Canberra's sole goal.

Canberra's skipper and former international Robbie Hooker, stated to ABSW last night: "After Olympic's loss last Sunday night to the Power, they'll now really want to beat us.

"I would have preferred Olympic to have beaten the Power, but now they'll be more desperate than ever.

"We have been playing well this season, and have done very well against the better teams strangely enough," Hooker boasted of his team.

Hooker knows Olympic really well as it was he that captained Olympic to its first and only League Championship back in 1990.

"I still have found memories from those old days when I was captain of Sydney Olympic."

When questioned about Canberra's Uruguayan Cortes, Hooker was full of praise.

"He's only a small bloke and when he first came out here we all thought he was a jockey. That's how small he is and we were about to ask him to give us a winner at the tracks.

"But joking aside, when Milton, (Cortes), does come on, he does really well," Hooker assured us.

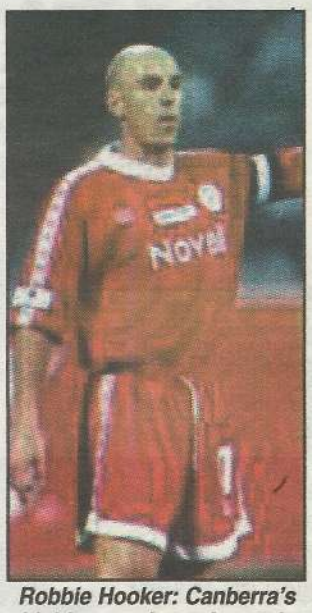
One of Canberra's exceptionally talented players, is their Japanese import, Hiroshima Miyazawa who plays as a sweeper or central marker.

Miyazawa is a real quality player and a technically correct 'reader' of the game.

Canberra will be missing two players, (Andrew Ravanello and Daniel Aliffi), both out serving their respective suspensions.

Canberra's block-busting goalscorer, Jon Angelucci is back from serving a suspension.

It's expected that newly appointed coach and 1979 Australian World Youth Championship left defender, Mike Milovanovic, will rush the robust Angelucci straight into the side for the Olympic clash.



Robbie Hooker: Canberra's highly experienced captain and sweeper.

Sydney Olympic vs Canberra Cosmos

Sunday 1st April

AT THE

BELMORE SPORTS GROUND

Sydney Olympic F.C.

Canberra Cosmos F.C.

MAIN GAME — KICK OFF 5PM ● YOUTH LEAGUE 2.30PM

Ante Juric

Damon Collina

Elias Augerinos

Dylan MacAllister

Kresimir Marusic

Robbie Hooker

Hiroshima Miyazawa

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ROUND 8

ROYALS SUFFER SEVENTH LOSS

ESSENDON ROYALS 2
ST ALBANS 1

Two lapses of concentration were enough to plunge the Essendon Royals to their seventh defeat in succession, losing 2-1 to St Albans at Epping Stadium last Saturday night.

The Royals were forced to reshuffle their starting line up after new signing Josep Kozic from the Melbourne Knights was not cleared to play by Soccer Australia in time for the weekend's match.

Against the run of play and with just three minutes left in the first half, St Albans went ahead. A poor clearance allowed Kon Sianidis to push the ball into the net from 2 metres.

Essendon equalised in the 75th minute, when Ben Scerri after 75 minutes launched a looping header over Saints 'keeper Marjan Vunderl.

But Essendon's celebrations were short lived as an unchallenged Ivan Zilic struck the winner for St Albans minutes later with a shot inside the box.

The Royals are languishing at the bottom of the ladder, while the Saints are in second place, two points behind the Sharks.

High-riding Sharks down Phoenix

PORT MELBOURNE 3
ALTONA EAST 2

By John Rigas

Leader Port Melbourne battled hard to beat fourth-placed Altona East 3-2 in a physical encounter at Paisley Park on Sunday.

The Phoenix are now without a point from their last three matches, which must be a concern to coach Chris Taylor as his side faces an improving St Albans Saints on Sunday.

Port's Tas Psonis, Peter Psarros and John Pappas created early chances, while Paul Donnelly narrowly missed for Altona.

The Sharks went ahead in the 38th minute, when Psonis found lethal striker Psarros, who put the ball past Altona 'keeper Sam Frangos.

Altona equalised in the 48th minute. Port 'keeper Steve Wardle blocked a Donnelly shot from close range, but midfielder Peter Groidis struck on the rebound.

Only two minutes later Port regained the lead. Mitch Pino supplied Nick Tsaltas who powered his shot past Frangos from close range.

Yet, Steve Pantelidis brought Altona level for a second time with a powerful header from a free-kick in the 56th minute.

Port went ahead for a third time in the 61st minute when defender Jean Paul Knezevic headed home a Psonis corner.

The Phoenix endeavored to find a reply five minutes later, but Evan Papadopoulos hit the crossbar and Donnelly headed the upright on the rebound.

On top of the table, Port Melbourne has lost defender Richard Watson, who has left the club and returned home to Perth for business purposes.

Watson's departure will leave a big gap in Port's defence.

• TOP SCORERS •

After Round 8

Player	Club	Goals
Juan Nilo	Bentleigh Greens	6
Peter Psarros	Port Melbourne Sharks	6
Nick Tsaltas	Port Melbourne Sharks	6
Zoran Todorovski	Altona Magic	5
Alfonso Opazo	Heidelberg United	5

• RESULTS •

ROUND 8

Saturday 24 March 2001

Dandenong Thunder *(Gazmend Ajdini)*	1	Altona Magic *(Zoran Todorovski 3, John Markovski, Sash Becvinovski)*	5
Essendon Royals *(Ben Scerri)*	1	St Albans Saints *(Kon Sianidis, Ivan Zilic)*	2

Sunday 25 March 2001

Green Gully Cavaliers *(Brandon Vassallo)*	1	Bentleigh Greens	0
Preston Lions *(Robert Stojcevski, Santo Emmanuele)*	0	Fawkner Blues	2
Heidelberg United *(Sava Rusmir)*	0	Bulleen Zebras	1
Altona East Phoenix *(Steve Pantelidis, Paul Donnelly) John Paul Knezevic)*	2	Port Melb Sharks *(Peter Psarros, Nick Tsaltas,*	3

Zebras beat Bergers with late charge

BULLEEN ZEBRAS 1
HEIDELBERG UNITED 0

By George Koukeris

A last minute push by the Bulleen Zebras paid dividends as they registered a 1-0 victoria over Heidelberg United at Olympic Village last Sunday.

Not much luck has been circling around the Veneto Club lately. A disastrous start to the season with only five points after six rounds and the loss of their home turf due to ground conditions has set the Zebras on the back foot from the outset this season.

The game seemed destined for a nil-all draw, until the closing stages, when Sava Rusmir sealed the winner with just 60 seconds of normal time remaining.

The goal was the result of a late charge from Bulleen winning a string of corner kicks.

A short pass to the edge of the penalty area gave Lance Plunkett ample time to deliver a superb cross for Rusmir's match winner.

While Heidelberg is in third place from the top, Bulleen is third place from bottom and still has a lot of work to do if it is to clinch a finals berth.

The Bergers meanwhile have lost some of their early momentum and are three points adrift of the leader.

VIC PREMIER LEAGUE LADDER
(AFTER ROUND 8)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Port Melbourne Sharks	8	6	0	2	22	10	18
St. Albans Saints	7	5	1	1	13	6	16
Heidelberg United	8	5	0	3	9	5	15
Altona East Phoenix	8	5	0	3	14	14	15
Bentleigh Greens	8	4	2	2	14	6	14
Green Gully Cavaliers	8	4	1	3	12	11	13
Fawkner Blues	8	2	4	2	7	8	10
Preston Lions	8	3	1	4	6	10	10
Altona Magic	8	2	3	3	9	10	9
Bulleen Zebras	7	2	2	3	7	7	8
Dandenong Thunder	8	0	3	5	5	18	3
Essendon Royals	8	0	1	7	6	19	1

Victorian Premier League

ROUND 9

FRIDAY, 30TH MARCH
Port Melbourne Sharks vs Bentleigh Greens — S.S. Anderson Reserve
U21: 6.15pm • First Grade: 8.15pm

SATURDAY 31ST MARCH
Altona Magic vs Preston Lions — Paisley Reserve
U21: 5.00pm • First Grade: 7.00pm
South Dandenong vs Green Gully Cavaliers — George Andrew Reserve
U21: 3.00pm • First Grade: 5.00pm

SUNDAY 1ST APRIL
St Albans Saints vs Altona East Phoenix — Churchill Reserve
U21: 3.00pm • First Grade: 5.00pm
Fawkner Blues vs Heidelberg Utd — C.B. Smith Reserve
U21: 1.00pm • First Grade: 3.00pm

MONDAY 2ND APRIL
Bullee Zebras vs Essendon — Veneto Club
U21: 6.15pm • First Grade: 8.15pm

For more information, log onto
www.soccervictoria.org.au

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PREMIER LEAGUE WRAP-UPS By Glenn Davis

By Glenn Davis

Arch rivals Brisbane City and Brisbane Lions remained locked at the top of the table after both sides had contrasting wins in the Queensland Premier League last weekend.

While Brisbane City had a comfortable 4-0 away win over a disappointing Gold Coast, Brisbane Lions struggled away to topple Toowoomba Raiders 2-1.

Brisbane Lions had to wait until near the death to snatch the winning goal when 17-year-old striker Michael Baird drove a slow shot home from 15 metres after good lead-up work from midfielder Des Hughes.

"It was very difficult game for us and it always is when we play in Toowoomba," said Brisbane Lions coach John Ogden.

Brisbane Lions took an early lead after just ten minutes when former Rochedale striker Matt Olley got tothe byline and crossed to the far post to give Reece Tollenaere an easy tap in.

Toowoomba got back on level terms before the break when reliable striker Colin Hackwood raced on to a long ball over the Lions defence before slotting home.

"The first half was very difficult as Toowoomba got men behind the ball and made it hard for us to.penetrate," Ogden said.

Brisbane City led 2-0 at the break following a 10th minute own goal and a sensational overhead goal from Alan Cameron who finished off a Vedran Becirbegovic cross on the half hour.

Cameron landed his double slotting home 15 minutes after the break to give Brisbane City a deserved 3-0 lead and was unlucky not the snare a hat-trick after later missing an easy chance.

Brisbane City extended their lead to four with 20 minutes still remaining when substitute Aaron Alridge headed home a corner.

Brisbane City coach Danny Wright injected Alridge into the game at halftime replacing striker Mark Battistin who started with a stomach virus.

"It was a tremendous result and we didn't give the Gold Coast a sniff," Wright said.

Danny Wright: Brisbane City coach.

"It was one of our best away performances since I began coaching them last season."

Wright had plenty of praise for 18-year-old defender Ned Stevens who did a superb marking job on Gold Coast dangerman Adam Poric.

Wynnum also maintained their unbeaten record at Perry Park on Saturday with a hard fought 2-0 win against a lively Taringa Rovers.

Wynnum, with two wins and two draws, are snapping at the heels of the co-leaders just two points behind.

A goal in each half from striker Scott Rocker and a missed penalty from Taringa's Steve Dawes continued Wynnum's great start to the season.

Taringa had Wynnum under pressure many times throughout the game in a match which coach Peter Tokesi believed could have gone either way.

Rocker, who had been in a form slump until he scored in the previous round again Rochedale, gave his side a 1-0 lead at half time finishing off a cross from Rockhampton teenager Josh Rose.

Wynnum should have gone it at halftime with comfortable 2-nil lead but Scott McLean blasted over the crossbar with only the Taringa keeper to beat five minutes from the break.

Tokesi was again pleased to see hard work on the training paddock pay off midway through the second half when Rocker headed home at the far post off a superb cross from the corner by Shane Gilroy.

"The pleasing part for me about the win was both goals came straight from training and worked moves," Tokesi said.

Rookie coach Keiran Cooper pulled off a master stroke by playing rugged defender Damian Harris in the front line in his side's 4-0 away win over Pine Rivers.

Cooper, who took over coaching following the shock resignation of Peter Bannon a fortnight ago, showed he had a trick or two up his sleeve when Harris finished off a cutback to give Rochedale a 1-0 lead at the break.

A second half double from Danny Flaskas, who's playing on loan from Wynnum and a late goal from Roy Huth provided an easy victory for their first win of the season.

"We've been having a lot of trouble scoring so I played big Damian up front," Copper said."I don't think he's played up front since he was five but he did the job.

"I thought we should have got some result out of our loss to Wynnum last week and I'm glad to see the monkey is off our back."

"Chris is just 15 but he's been simply outstanding and it's good to see the young lads come through our own junior ranks," Cooper said.

Mt Gravatt returned to earth with a thud after a 6-2 hammering by Bundaberg Waves at the Across The Waves Sports Complex in Bundaberg.

Mt Gravatt trailed 1-0 after just two minutes before Mark Davidson got his side back level in the 15th minute then striker Aaron Baldwin put his side into the lead midway though the opening half.

However, Bundaberg, who like Toowoomba, are a tough side to beat at home, went to the break locked 2-2.

Mt Gravatt coach Mal Bland would rather forget the match which saw the home side score four times in a second half rout.

In the only Sunday fixture, Ipswich Knights came from behind to snatch a 1-l home draw with Easts.

QUEENSLAND PREMIER LEAGUE

FIXTURES ROUND 5

Saturday 31st March	
B'berg Waves v TBA Raiders	7.00pm
Eastern Suburbs v Wynnum	7.00pm
Mt Gravatt v Rochedale Rovers	6.00pm
Sunday 1st April	
Brisbane City v IPSW Knights	2.45pm
Taringa Rovers v Pine Rivers	2.45pm
Brisbane Lions v Gold Coast	4.00pm

XXXX LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Brisbane City	4	3	1	0	13	5	10
Brisbane Lions	4	3	1	0	14	7	10
Wynnum	4	2	2	0	8	5	8
B'berg Waves	4	2	0	2	12	12	6
IPSW Knights	4	1	2	1	8	7	5
Rochedale Rovers	4	1	1	2	8	6	4
Taringa Rovers	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Mt Gravatt	4	1	1	2	12	14	4
T'wmba Raiders	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Eastern Suburbs	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Gold Coast City	3	1	0	2	6	10	3
Pine Rivers Utd	4	0	1	3	7	17	1

ROUND 4

B'berg Waves	6	Mt Gravatt	2
T'wmba Raiders	1	Brisbane Lions	2
Gold Coast City	0	Brisbane City	4
IPSW Knights	1	Eastern Suburbs	1
Wynnum	2	Taringa Rovers	0
Pine Rivers Utd	0	Rochedale Rovers	4

DIVISION 1 XXXX RESERVES

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Rochedale Rovers	4	4	0	0	8	2	12
Brisbane Lions	4	3	0	1	13	4	9
Brisbane City	4	3	0	1	10	7	9
Mt Gravatt	4	2	1	1	7	7	7
Eastern Suburbs	4	2	0	2	8	5	6
Gold Coast City	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Taringa Rovers	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Wynnum	4	1	1	2	9	9	4
IPSW Knights	4	1	0	3	6	7	3
B'berg Waves	4	1	0	3	3	10	3
T'wmba Raiders	4	1	0	3	2	9	3
Pine Rivers Utd	4	0	0	4	3	12	0

ROUND 4

B'berg Waves	1	Mt Gravatt	2
T'wmba Raiders	0	Brisbane Lions	2
Gold Coast City	4	Brisbane City	1
IPSW Knights	2	Eastern Suburbs	5
Wynnum	1	Taringa Rovers	2
Pine Rivers Utd	1	Rochedale Rovers	2

DIVISION 1 XXXX YOUTH

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Wynnum	4	4	0	0	10	6	12
Brisbane Lions	3	3	0	0	13	0	9
Sunshine Coast	4	3	0	1	13	8	9
Taringa Rovers	3	2	0	1	9	5	6
IPSW Knights	4	2	0	2	8	9	6
T'wmba Raiders	4	2	0	2	7	13	6
Rochedale Rovers	4	1	1	2	5	5	4
Gold Coast City	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Pine Rivers Utd	4	1	1	2	4	6	4
Brisbane City	4	1	0	3	5	10	3
Eastern Suburbs	4	0	1	3	2	8	1
Mt Gravatt	3	0	0	3	5	11	0

ROUND 4

Sunshine Coast	5	Mt Gravatt	1
T'wmba Raiders	0	Brisbane Lions	7
Gold Coast City	1	Brisbane City	2
IPSW Knights	3	Eastern Suburbs	1
Wynnum	1	Taringa Rovers	0
Pine Rivers Utd	1	Rochedale Rovers	1

DIVISION 1 SEMI PRO

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Slacks Creek	4	4	0	0	15	4	12
The Gap	4	3	1	0	8	4	10
Brisbane Olympic Utd	4	2	2	0	10	5	8
Redlands Utd	4	2	2	0	10	6	8
North Star	4	1	3	0	10	7	6
Albany Creek	4	1	2	1	7	7	5
Capalaba	4	1	2	1	6	8	5
Rocklea Utd	4	1	2	1	5	7	5
Souths Utd	3	1	1	1	6	5	4
Grange Thistle	4	1	0	3	5	7	3
Newmarket	3	1	0	2	5	7	3
Mitchelton	4	1	0	3	5	9	3
Acacia Ridge	4	0	1	3	4	13	1
North Pine	4	0	0	4	3	10	0

ROUND 4

Acacia Ridge	0	The Gap	2
Albany Creek	2	North Star	2
Capalaba	2	Mitchelton	1
Grange Thistle	2	Slacks Creek	3
Rocklea Utd	1	Redlands Utd	4
Newmarket	0	Brisbane Olympic Utd	4
Souths Utd	4	North Pine	2

DIVISION 1 SEMI PRO Reserves

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Redlands Utd	5	5	0	0	15	4	15
Souths Utd	4	4	0	0	15	5	12
North Star	5	3	2	0	10	5	11
Slacks Creek	5	3	1	1	12	5	10
Albany Creek	5	2	2	1	9	6	8
Mitchelton	5	2	1	2	12	6	7
Rocklea Utd	5	2	1	2	15	17	7
Newmarket	5	2	0	3	12	13	6
Grange Thistle	5	2	0	3	7	16	6
The Gap	5	1	2	2	11	9	5
Brisbane Olympic Utd	4	1	0	3	11	15	3
Capalaba	5	1	0	4	5	13	3
Acacia Ridge	5	1	0	4	3	15	3
North Pine	5	0	1	4	8	16	1

ROUND 5

Mitchelton	1	Grange Thistle	2
North Star	1	Capalaba	0
Acacia Ridge	1	Albany Creek	4
Brisbane Olympic Utd	0	Souths Utd	0
Redlands Utd	3	Newmarket	1
Slacks Creek	2	Rocklea Utd	2
The Gap	1	North Pine	1

DIVISION 1 SEMI PRO Youth

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Souths Utd	5	5	0	0	31	4	15
Capalaba	5	5	0	0	27	3	15
Acacia Ridge	4	3	1	0	18	3	10
Mitchelton	5	3	0	2	13	11	9
Redlands Utd	5	2	2	1	11	10	8
Newmarket	4	2	1	1	9	10	7
Slacks Creek	5	2	0	3	9	21	6
Rocklea Utd	5	1	2	2	8	13	5
Albany Creek	5	1	1	3	9	10	4
North Pine	5	1	1	3	8	12	4
The Gap	4	1	0	3	6	14	3
Grange Thistle	5	1	0	4	8	19	3
Brisbane Olympic Utd	4	1	0	3	5	16	3
North Star	3	0	0	3	4	20	0

ROUND 5

Mitchelton	5	Grange Thistle	1
North Star	0	Capalaba	8
Acacia Ridge	2	Albany Creek	2
Brisbane Olympic United	0	Souths Utd	8
Redlands Utd	3	Newmarket	3
Slacks Creek	4	Rocklea Utd	2
The Gap	2	North Pine	1

NSW's Winter League Launch

By Arvind Hickman

This year's NSW Winter Super League promises to be one of the closest in recent times with the introduction of eight new teams, and the return of some hot local rivalries.

The season was launched last Wednesday night in spectacular fashion at the Christina Lounge, Club Marconi.

NSW Soccer Federation President, Peter Grey led a host of dignitaries attending the function, including the NSW Soccer Federation Board of Directors, Club Officials, Club captains, and the local media.

NSWSF President, Peter Gray, speaking at the Winter Super League Launch at Club Marconi last Wednesday night.

The night kicked off in vibrant fashion with the Marconi Stallionettes performing a well choreographed dance routine to the delight of the largely male crowd.

The Twelve teams were then introduced, (AC United, Bankstown City Lions, Dulwich Hill, Fairfield Bulls, Fraser Park, Hajduk Wanderers, Hurstville City Minotaurs, Macarthur Rams, Manly Warringah Dolphins, M.S.C. Liverpool, Rockdale City Suns & Stanmore Hawks), with insightful comments from each of the club captains.

Eight former State League teams have been introduced this season to take the place of this years Premier League expats, with the remaining four teams coming from last years Winter Super League competition.

The competition kicked off last weekend and will run for 22 rounds until mid-August with the top five teams battling it out in the final's series.

AC UNITED

Position in 2000: 4th in Division One

This is AC United's first season of Winter Super League and they are optimistic about their chances. Coach, and former Australian international, Paul Carter, has a strong emphasis on youth this season but believes his side will be competitive.

"AC are an ambitious club and I have assembled a competitive side which should do well. I will be looking to develop our strong junior base and bring some of the talent in the youth teams into the senior ranks."

Players to watch include Ben Price, Gordon Sutherland, Adam McDonald and coach Paul Carter.

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS

Position in 2000: 7th in Super League.

Bankstown City are the most successful team competing in the year's Winter Super League having won the Premiership once and Championship twice before.

Coach, Claudio Canosa, should ensure his players give it their all in a bid to win the competition.

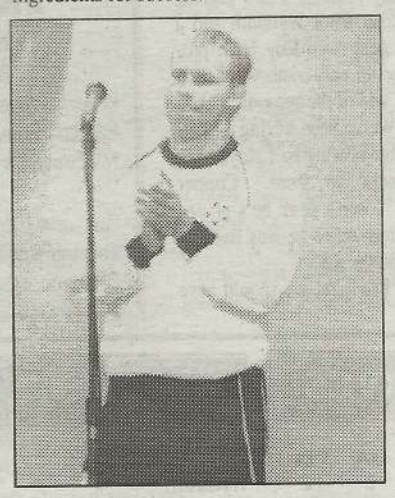
"Our aim this season is to perform the best we possibly can and to fight for a top position on the competition table. I urge a strong team performance and that we give one hundred percent and fight hard in all our matches."

Players to watch include Zlatko Josevski, Anthony Kanaan, Goce Trposki and Richard Luksic.

DULWICH HILL

Position in 2000: 1st in Division One

Dulwich Hill won last years Division One State League and are expected to be a genuine title contender. Coach, Bill Pilovski, believes it will be tough but he has the right ingredients for success.



Fairfield Bulls captain, Craig Sharpley.

"This season is going to be tough, but I believe we have the right mix of players to have a successful season. After winning the first division last season, every team will want to beat us and we will have to be at our very best every week to make the top five."

Players to watch include Hussein Jomaa, Ben Deighan, Eric Hristodoulou, Peter Trajcevski, Eddie Wong and Mattew Dihm.

FAIRFIELD BULLS

Position in 2000: 6th in Super League

Fairfield are the highest placed of last year's Winter Super League contingent and boast an even stronger squad this season.

Coach, John Turner, has only one objective, that is to win the competition.

"The committee here is highly ambitous and we will be going all out to win the comp. I have assembled a strong squad which I have every faith in to achieve that aim."

Players to watch include Frank Mikuletic, Matthew Borg, Sam La Rocca and Craig Sharpley.

FRASER PARK

Position in 2000: 3rd in Division One

Fraser Park should be another serious top five contender after a respectable third placing in Division One last year. Coach, Gerry Gomez, has faith in his chargers.

"We aim to make the topfive and play some good football along the way. This year's competition is going to be very competitive but I am confident we can hold our own and make the semi-finals."

Players to watch include Ben Burrows, Tom Pontidas, John Palapanis and Tony Canning.

HAJDUK WANDERERS

Position in 2000: 2nd in Division One

The Wanderers have lost a few of their key players from last season including Tom Pondeljak and Steve Tolios, but will be another looking for a finals birth. Coach, Phil Pavela, is optimistic about his teams chances.

"We are looking to have another strong season to build on a good year 2000. We will be looking to make the top five and take the club to the next level."

Players to watch include Jay Anderson, Joe Badrov, Trent Worrall and J.J.Ellul.

HURSTVILLE CITY MINOTAURS

Position in 2000: 8th in Division One

Hurstville are not expected to challenge for the title but will still trouble some of their more developed opponents. Coach, Peter Sarikakis, believes his squad is talented enough to make an impact.

"We are not a big spending club but we have a assembled a team of talented and committed players who will give it everything."

Players to watch include Huseyin Bayhan, Spiro Kladis, Angelo Kalamvokis and Nick Andreou.

MACARTHUR RAMS

Position in 2000: 12th in Super League

Danny Townsend, Manly Warringah captain and mobile flanker.

The Rams, despite being in Super League last season, will find the going tough this year having lost a lot of players. Coach, Hugh McCrory, believes this season is a year for consolidation.

"We are not getting carried away with any bold predictions, but with guys like Martin Bourke and Eric Williams in the side we will be competitive and give some sides a run for their money."

Players to watch include Zia Younan, Eric Williams and Martin Bourke.

MANLY-WARRINGAH DOLPHINS

Position in 2000: 13th in Super League.

Manly Warringah should resurge as a force this year after recruiting many Northern Spirit juniors and former Parramatta Power player, Danny Townsend.

Coach, Gary Van Egmond, will be aiming for promotion into next years Premier League. "Our aim this season is to win the competition and seek promotion into the NSW Premier League. We are all committed to that aim and we will be giving it everything we have."

Players to watch include Phil Moss, Danny Townsend, Adam Snyder and Antonio Faria.

M.S.C. LIVERPOOL

Position in 2000: 7th in Division One

Liverpool are another team looking to consolidate and bleed their junior players this season. Coach, Brian Deane, will be trying to keep his side competitve.

"We want to make sure we consolidate the club this season and be as competitive as possible on the park."

Players to watch include Zlatko Momircevski, Peter Moon and Brett Hewit.

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS

Position in 2000: 5th in Division One

Rockdale will be aiming for finals football and boast enough talent to get there. Coach, Mile Todoroski, believes his team is a genuine finals contender.

"We have some very good players here at Rockdale and we will be aiming to make the top five."

Players to watch include Spase Najdoski, Andrew McHardy and Saso Boskovski.

STANMORE HAWKS

Position in 2000: 6th in Division One

The Hawks will spend this season looking to consolidate. Coach, George Lazarou, will be happy with a mid-table finish.

"I'm not going to make any bold predictions about where we will finish but if we finish mid-table I will be happy. If we finish any higher that will be a bonus."

Players to watch include Eddie Briscoe, Patrick Galloway and Malcolm Adams.

NSWSF Board of Directors Vice President, Ross Kelly, flanked by Arthur Sullivan (left) and Phil Sampson (right) of M.S.C Liverpool at the 2001 Winter Super League Launch held at Club Marconi last Wednesday night.

NSW Youth League Results

CANTERBURY MARRICKVILLE OLYMPIC

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SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

GRADE 17: Bankstown City Cubs 1 Wollongong Wolves 1, Newcastle United 1 Parramatta Eagles 2, Sydney United 3 Sydney Olympic 4, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3 Eastern Suburbs 1, Blacktown City Demons 2 Fairfield Bulls 2, Marconi Stallions 1 Leichhardt Tigers 2, Canterbury Marrickville 2 Manly Warringah Dolphins 0, Sutherland Shire 4 Macarthur Rams 1, St George 1 Penrith Panthers 5, Northern Spirit 3 Central Coast Coasties 0.

GRADE 15: Bankstown City Cubs 3 Wollongong Wolves 3, Newcastle United 0 Parramatta Eagles 4, Sydney United 1 Sydney Olympic 0, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 Eastern Suburbs 2, Blacktown City Demons 5 Fairfield Bulls 1, Marconi Stallions 5 Leichhardt Tigers 1, Canterbury Marrickville 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 3, Sutherland Shire 1 Macarthur Rams 0, St George 0 Penrith Panthers 0, Northern Spirit 3 Central Coast Coasties 0.

GRADE 14: Bankstown City Cubs 0 Wollongong Wolves 2, Newcastle United 2 Parramatta Eagles 2, Sydney United 3 Sydney Olympic 1, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Eastern Suburbs 0, Blacktown City Demons 4 Fairfield Bulls 0, Marconi Stallions 4 Leichhardt Tigers 1, Canterbury Marrickville 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 1, Sutherland Shire 2 Macarthur Rams 0, St George 1 Penrith Panthers 1, Northern Spirit 6 Central Coast Coasties 0.

GRADE 13: Bankstown City Cubs 2 Wollongong Wolves 4, Newcastle United 1 Parramatta Eagles 3, Sydney United 0 Sydney Olympic 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 Eastern Suburbs 0, Blacktown City Demons 5 Fairfield Bulls 0, Marconi Stallions 1 Leichhardt Tigers 1, Canterbury Marrickville 1 Manly Warringah Dolphins 2, Sutherland Shire 3 Macarthur Rams 0, St George 1 Penrith Panthers 4, Northern Spirit 3 Central Coast Coasties 0.

SUPER CADET LEAGUE

GRADE 12: Bankstown City Cubs 0 Wollongong Wolves 1, Sydney United 1 Sydney Olympic 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 Eastern Suburbs 2.
St George 1 Penrith Panthers 0, Marconi Stallions 4 Leichhardt Tigers 1, Blacktown City Demons 5 Fairfield Bulls 0, Canterbury Marrickville 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 2, Sutherland Shire 1 Macarthur Rams 0, Northern Spirit 1 Central Coast Coasties 0.

GRADE 11: Bankstown City Cubs 0 Wollongong Wolves 6, Sydney United 0 Sydney Olympic 2, Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 Eastern Suburbs 4.
St George 1 Penrith Panthers 0, Marconi Stallions 2 Leichhardt Tigers 1, Blacktown City Demons 4 Fairfield Bulls 0, Canterbury Marrickville 0 Manly Warringah Dolphins 2, Sutherland Shire 1 Macarthur Rams 3, Northern Spirit 3 Central Coast Coasties 0.

NSW Premier League

VALENTINE SPORTS PARK

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NSW Premier League

SEMI FINALS

EAGLES FLY HIGH

WRAP-UPS

Blacktown	2
Bonnyrigg	3

This match lived up to its billing as the biggest of the season as it see-sawed to a finish that left the crowd in amazement.

Bonnyrigg dominated the game and were deserved winners, though for a while they looked as if they had thrown it away.

After the scores were leveled twice and both teams took the lead in the second half, the responsibility eventually fell to Bonnyrigg goalkeeper Fernando Greco from the penalty spot in injury time.

This was an exciting match, with plenty of goalmouth action and intense tackling. The White Eagles advance to the Grand Final at Marconi Stadium on April 8.

Parramatta	2
Canterbury-Marrickville	0

By Stuart Veitch

Parramatta emerged from its recent run of indifferent form to eliminate Canterbury-Marrickville with a 2-0 win in the minor semi-final.

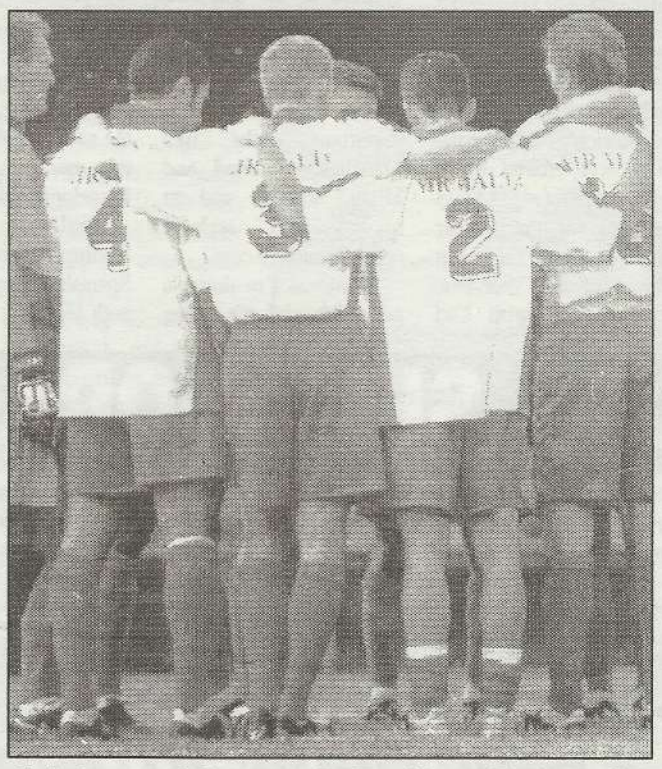
It was a victory which would have pleased the Eagles coach more than the fans, being marked more by discipline and determination than free-flowing football.

Parramatta was off to a dream start when after just seven minutes, Reveley won a loose ball and attacked the space before him. With outstanding vision he passed to Cummins, ghosting into the area on his defender's blind side, who chested down and fired home.

The midfield battle was the footballing equivalent of trench warfare, with a player dwelling too long on the ball feeling the full force of an opponent's tackle. The casualties were mostly from the Parramatta side, with midfielders Islas and Cummins retiring before the half time.

Parramatta's Balla Conde, patrolling the space behind the two strikers, distinguished himself with his skill and creative passing from the midfield, and loomed as the critical difference between the two sides. In stoppage time, Conde sent a long ball to Bakis at the far post. Bakis controlled the ball well and firmly placed his shot past the exposed Bello-Amigo, to double the Eagles lead.

In the second half, it was the Berries who had to score twice, while Parramatta concentrated even harder on keeping their shape behind the ball.



United we stand: Parramatta Eagles will meet Blacktown City this Sunday for the right to play Bonnyrigg in the NSW Premier League Grand Final.

The Berries best chance came when a concentration lapse at the back saw Amegashie get through on the break. It epitomised the Berries' day that Amegashie did not take his opportunity with sufficient conviction, being forced into a harmless wide position.

From that point, it seemed that the Berries had accepted their fate. Under little pressure, they gave away possession too easily, and looked unconvincing when chances presented themselves for a strike on goal.

Minor Semi-Final

Parramatta Eagles 2
(D Cummins 6m J Bakis 43m)
C'bury M/ville 0

Major Semi-Final

Blacktown City 2
(Z Donev 70m S Riches 74m)
Bonnyrigg 3
(M Hawrysiuk 58m J Ghisso 82m F Greco 93m)

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND 1

Bankstown City 1 Fairfield Bulls 0

Bankstown City Lions conquered the opening day of the Super League season, with victory over the Fairfield Bulls at Jensen Park.

A single goal settled the outcome, which was remembered more for the struggle in midfield than for the attacking flair promised by two quality teams brought together by two coaches, both in their first seasons with their clubs.

Little can be taken from this result, with both teams failing to capitalise on the good build-up from defence into attack, in a match where first game nerves and early season rustiness won the day over good quality attacking football.

Fraser Park Jets 1 Dulwich Hill 2

Dulwich Hill got their 2001 Super League season off to a winning start, when they defeated arch rivals Fraser Park 2-1.

Brilliantly led by former Leichhardt Tigers striker Steve Karavatakis with two goals, Dulwich Hill were able to outlast the Jets in front of a bumper crowd at Fraser Park.

Karavatakis scored the first via an overhead kick a minute short of the break, which was cancelled out by a Peter Pullicino volley in the 73rd minute. The winner came from the head of Karavatakis just eight minutes short of time after some good lead-up work by defender Mathew Dihm.

Hurstville City 0 Rockdale City 1

Rockdale got their 2001 Super League season off to a good start with a 1-0 victory over local rivals Hurstville City Minotaurs at St George Stadium.

A rare goal to defender Andrew McHardy on 55 minutes gave Rockdale all three points, although Hurstville missed a glorious chance to equalise when Michael Kladis saw his late penalty pushed away by Rockdale goalkeeper Amir Ajanovic.

Stanmore Hawks 0 Macarthur Rams 2

The Macarthur Rams got their 2001 Super League campaign off to an ideal start last Sunday against the Stanmore Hawks, with two second half goals helping Hugh McCrory and his men to all three competition points at Arlington Oval.

Eric Williams was the first to get on the scoreboard, blasting the Rams ahead after 52 minutes. In the 76th minute, Richard Harrison streaked away down the left flank and fired a left-foot shot into the bottom right hand corner for a 2-0 result in the Rams favour.

Hajduk Wanderers 0 Manly Warringah 2

The Manly Warringah Dolphins stormed home with two late goals over Hajduk Wanderers to clinch a 2-0 result away from home.

After a heavy clash between Hajduk's Salameh and Dolphin's keeper McCreath, the game reached the inevitable with the Dolphins first goal.

With Adam Griffith streaming down the right flank, he crossed to see Tony Faria score with a cheeky back-heel to break the deadlock in the 74th minute.

Several other chances went begging for the Dolphins and finally it was Peter Antar in the 89th minute that made it two-nil when he controlled a through ball from a free kick in the Dolphin half and steered it past the Hajduk goalkeeper.

MSC Liverpool 2 AC United 2

The spoils were shared in the opening match of the season for these two sides.

A game of two halves; AC United totally controlled the first half with a short, sharp passing game.

M.S.C. Liverpool started the match in sloppy fashion and did not really threaten United until the end of the first stanza. M.S.C. Liverpool made a tactical change at half time and subsequently took control of the match and finished the stronger side.

NSW SUPER LEAGUE LADDER

(AFTER ROUND 1)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Macarthur Rams	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Manly Warringah	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Dulwich Hill	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Bankstown City Lions	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Rockdale City Suns	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
AC United	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
MSC Liverpool	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Fraser Park	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Fairfield Bulls	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
H'ville City Minotaurs	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Hajduk Wanderers	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Stanmore Hawks	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

For further information see: www.nswpremierleague.com

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SUNDAY 1st APRIL
SERBIAN CENTRE, BONNYRIGG
1ST GRADE: Parramatta Eagles v Blacktown City 5.00pm
UNDER 19: St George v Leichhardt 3.00pm

GRAND FINAL
SUNDAY 8th APRIL
MARCONI STADIUM, BOSSLEY PARK
1ST GRADE: Kick-Off 5.00pm
UNDER 19: Kick-Off 3.00pm

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WORLD

Rivaldo eyes Italian, English clubs

Barcelona forward Rivaldo said last week, he was flattered by reported interest from clubs such as AC Milan and Manchester United but insisted any future transfer was in the hands of his current club.

The Brazilian forward, whose contract runs until June 2003, has been linked in the Catalan press this week with a possible move away from the Nou Camp at the end of the season.

Barcelona could expect to receive around 8,000 million pesetas ($43.23 million) for the former World and European Player of the Year, the reports said, with Old Trafford or the San Siro seen as likely destinations.

"All I can say is that it gives me great pleasure to see my name linked with important clubs like Manchester United and Milan," Rivaldo said on his website www.Rivaldo10.com.

"It means I'm doing a good job and it's being recognised by a lot of people.

"However, when I signed my improved contract I gave Barcelona all the say in any transfer. At the moment it's up to Barcelona to decide."

Rivaldo is Barcelona's leading scorer in the Spanish league this season with 16 goals.

Rivaldo: Wants to lace boots for either — Manchester United or AC Milan.

MAN UTD SIGN GORAM

Manchester United have signed veteran Motherwell goalkeeper Andy Goram, BBC Radio reports.

United have brought the former Scotland player into their squad to help solve a goalkeeping injury crisis ahead of the Champions League quarter-final with Bayern Munich in April.

Goram, 36, has joined the Old Trafford club for three months, with United paying Motherwell 100,000 pounds for his services.

Fabien Barthez, the France international and number one choice at United, suffered a thigh strain as he warmed up moments before the match against Leicester City in the English premier league penultimate Saturday.

Number two Raimond van der Gouw is recovering from surgery on a knee injury, leaving 19-year- old Paul Rachubka as the only fit senior keeper at manager Alex Ferguson's disposal.

United face Bayern Munich in the first leg of the Champions League quarter-final at Old Trafford on April 3, with the return leg in Munich on April 18.

Goram spent seven seasons with Rangers between 1991 and 1998 and won 43 caps for Scotland.

9 players, officials die in car crash

Nine members of a Nigerian Soccer club were killed in a road accident in their bus on the way home from a match, the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) said last week.

"The dead were four players, four officials and the bus driver of the amateur league side Zagbai FC from Bauchi town in the north," NFA press officer Austin Mgbolu said.

"The NFA consider this a major tragedy and decided to postpone Zagbai's remaining matches indefinitely."

Mgbolu said the bus crashed into a stationary car in the early hours of Monday after a game in central Kogi town.

Matthaus hits at German machine

Lothar Matthaus

Former Germany captain Lothar Matthaus slammed the quality of the national team last week just three days before a World Cup qualifier with Albania.

"We lack real leaders. With the exception of Stefan Effenberg, there are no real stars in the Bundesliga," the former Bayern Munich libero told Sport-Bild.

"Perhaps maybe also Mehmet Scholl, who has become more mature. Only Oliver Kahn is also a star."

Matthaus singled out Dietmar Hamann — his former colleague at Bayern Munich — for attack, accusing the Liverpool midfielder of being ego-driven.

"I saw his true character during the European championship.

It doesn't matter what anyone says, he's egotistical. I noticed it too late. I certainly don't miss him," Matthaus said.

Matthaus went on to give rising stars Michael Ballack and Jens Nowotny of Bayer Leverkusen short shrift.

"Michael Ballack is not there yet," he said. "Jens Nowotny doesn't have the real oomph yet where I could say he is a leading player. He's too quiet. He needs to get out of himself more," said the winner of 150 Germany caps.

However, national coach Rudi Voeller quickly spoke up in defence of his team.

"Everyone has their own opinion," he said. "Nowotny is a leading player at Leverkusen and is very important for the national team, even if he plays very differently from Lothar before or Stefan Effenberg."

Voeller admitted the German team lacked the high-profile personalities it had 10 years ago, but said the quality and the structure of the team was important.

"And I feel we've got that just right," said Voeller.

Germany are currently top of group nine, which also features Finland, Greece and England, with six points from two games.

HASSELBAINK BEMOANS CHELSEA'S PLIGHT

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink has accused his Chelsea team of going nowhere and says the club have too many old players.

The Dutch international striker has scored 18 goals this season after joining from Atletico Madrid for 15 million pounds but had little positive to say about his new club in an interview in this month's edition of Champions League magazine.

"Sometimes I think I am in the wrong place at the wrong time. I'm not very lucky with the teams I choose to play for," he said.

"One year I play for a team that is relegated, like Atletico, and next year I play for a team that goes nowhere, like Chelsea.

"When we train my team mates are constantly saying those stupid things. They say 'Hey, Jimmy, do you know where we were last season without you? Now you are here and we are trying not to get relegated'.

"I'm 28 but I'm one of the youngest players in the squad and this is very bad. We have a good team but we are old.

"We must recruit young blood or look for it in Chelsea's youth system as soon as possible because the Premiership is one of the toughest leagues in the world."

Hasselbaink came to prominence when he joined Leeds United in 1997, scoring 20 and 22 goals in the next two seasons before heading for Spain where he scored 25 for Atletico.

Chelsea are currently ninth in the premier league.

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink

NEDVED GETS 3-MATCH BAN

Lazio's Czech midfidlder Pavel Nedved has been suspended for three matches for a dangerous tackle on Leeds United's Alan Maybury , UEFA said last week.

"Despite the referee not having seen the incident, but based on video evidence, the body (UEFA) imposed a three-match ban on SS Lazio player Pavel Neved for an extremely rough tackle against an opponent," European soccer's governing body said.

Nedved caught Maybury at knee height with his studs during injury time in Lazio's final Champions League second group stage match at Leeds, wich ended 3-3, on March 14.

Maybury left Elland Road ground on crutches but told reporters he did not think he would suffer long term damage.

There was nothing at stake except pride in the match since Leeds had already qualified for the quarter-finals and Lazio had already been eliminated.

Aragones may step-in at Valencia

Valencia president Pedro Cortes made it clear last week, he would like Real Mallorca coach Luis Aragones to take over if, as expected, current boss Hector Cuper quits at the end of the season.

Cuper revealed last week that there is "a high percentage" chance that he will leave at the end of the current campaign, which has brought constant criticism from a section of the Valencia fans despite continued success on the field.

Cortes is already talking about possible replacements should Cuper decide to call it a day and Aragones — who coached the club between 1995 and 1996 — is clearly his preferred option.

"I've not given up hope but it's very difficult," Cortes said of the Cuper situation in an interview with Onda Cero radio.

"I'm not going to wait until June. He'll advise us before then. If he decides to stay I'll be delighted but if he's going I'll have to be in the know.

"Luis Aragones is the best (of the other candidates) for me.

"He's a friend of mine but if I talk to him it will be based on his professionalism, not on our friendship.

"Hector Cuper is the ideal man for the job but otherwise the best is Aragones. He's my idol, He is football.

"If you put the word football in a dictionary a photo of Luis should come up."

Cuper's departure would be a blow for Valencia, who have made spectacular progress in his two seasons in charge.

After reaching the Champions League final last year they have once again made smooth progress in Europe's top club competition and face a quarter-final against Arsenal next month.

They are also going well in the Spanish first division, seven points behind Real Madrid in third place.

Aragones, now 62 and one of the most respected coaches in Spain, would be a popular choice to replace him.

As well as his spell in charge of Valencia, he has worked at Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Espanyol among a host of top flight clubs in a 27-year coaching career.

Salas sidelined by injury

Lazio's Chilean striker Marcelo Salas will be out of action for about two months because of a knee injury, the club said last week.

Salas damaged ligaments in his right knee in training last week and missed the Italian champions' 4-1 defeat of Juventus at the Olympic Stadium on Sunday.

He underwent magnetic resonance tests on Monday which confirmed the seriousness of the injury.

Marcelo Salas: Lazio's mercurial striker now out for two months with injury.

McNamanam tips Owen as world's best player

Steve McManaman insists Michael Owen can still graduate to the game's elite.

Owen made a huge impact as an 18-year-old when he starred in England's 1998 World Cup campaign, scoring a brilliant individual goal against Argentina.

Since then, he has suffered from persistent injury and a loss of form.

But, after training on Wednesday with his former Liverpool team mate during England's preparations for Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Finland, McManaman said Owen is returning to his best.

"He's still a very young lad and he's had a great international career already," said McManaman.

"I don't know his goals-to-games ratio but I bet it's very good.

"He's played against the best defenders in the world at the top level.

"You can't chalk off Michael Owen. He's a fantastic prospect and hopefully can become the best in the world."

Owen has scored eight goals in 25 appearances for England.

While the Liverpool striker already has many good memories to look back on, McManaman — despite being eight years his senior — is not as lucky.

After being voted on to the team of the tournament for his displays in Euro96, he has drifted in and out of the international scene.

Former England manager Glenn Hoddle refused to use McManaman in the 1998 World Cup, and the enigmatic winger only played a cameo role in Euro 2000 after picking up an injury in the opening group game against Portugal.

Michael Owen

But he refuses to bemoan his England fate.

"I have had a decent crack with England," he said.

"I think I've got 31 caps, which I'm very happy with and I'm hoping I will achieve a lot more. "I haven't achieved a good deal in the respect of winning things, but everyone wants to achieve something with England and I'm not alone."

PSG, GALATASARAY HIT WITH FINE, BAN

Paris St Germain have been fined one million Swiss francs ($586,500) and banned from their Parc des Princes ground for three European matches after crowd violence at last fortnightís Champions League game against Galatasaray.

Galatasaray were fined 200,000 Swiss francs "given the Turkish club's lack of cooperation in controlling their fans," on March 13, UEFA said.

UEFA said PSG's next three European games would have to be played at least 300 kilometres from Paris. That would leave grounds at Lyon and Nantes as possible alternatives.

Trouble flared during halftime of the game, with French and Turkish supporters lobbing missiles at each other and trying to break security fences in the stands.

The match was stopped by referee Vitor Manuel Melo Pereira after two spectators wearing Galatasaray colours ran on to the pitch.

The two clubs have until midnight on Saturday to appeal the UEFA control and disciplinary board's decisions.

Galatasaray lost the group B match 2-0 but had already qualified for the quarter-finals. PSG were eliminated from the competition before the game.

AJAX PLANS SYNTHETIC TURF

Ajax chairman Michael van Praag has revealed that the Amsterdam giants are likely to play home matches on an artificial pitch within the next five years.

"We would then again be trend-setters in Europe," he said.

Van Praag claimed that he had the full backing of UEFA and FIFA for his scheme to finally rid the Amsterdam Arena of its persistent grass problems.

Over 30 pitches have had to be replaced since 1996 at a cost of £120,000 a time, owing to a lack of light and ventilation inside the stadium.

"Uefa have wanted this [artificial grass] for two years," Van Praag said.

"They, together with FIFA, have just finished setting up objective criteria for artificial pitches.

Euro clubs blamed for passport scams

Brazilian lawmakers investigating corruption in soccer said last week European clubs were also responsible for issuing false passports to players, a scandal that has rocked the sport.

"Without denying Brazilians' responsibility ... we have facts which show the part managers, agents, and European clubs played in the false passport scandal," Aldo Rebelo, the president of Brazil's investigating commission told a news conference.

More than 70 mainly South American players in France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal, have been found with false European Union passports in order to circumvent residence and player quota regulations.

Rebelo said there was no sign the fake Portuguese passports some Brazilians had been caught with were issued in Brazil or passed through the country before ending up in the players' hands.

Among the most high-profile cases he cited in his favor was Brazilian international stalwart Cafu, who claimed to have received a fake passport from Roma club president.

Rebelo, a left-wing lawmaker, has claimed his commission has uncovered an international "mafia" wich transfers players with false documents. His commission's report on the scam prompted FIFA president Sepp Blatter to call for worldwide bans against players found guilty of using false passports.

But Rebelo said it was unfair that the blame for the scandal be laid squarely on the heads of players, many of whom were underage and had been roped into restrictive contracts by European clubs.

Among them was Brazilian Leonardo who had to sign with Dutch club Feyenoord for seven years because he was underage, and was fined for having a false Portuguese passport which the club itself had provided, he said.

Rebelo said he spoke to Leonardo in front of Feyenoord officials and the striker had said he would rather give up soccer rather than play under his current "slave" contract.

Dutch prosecutors, who earlier this month allowed the 18-year-old to play in the Netherlands after his application for a work permit was granted, say there is no evidence to suggest Feyenoord had anything to do with the false documents.

Graham accuse Spurs of smear campaign

Former Tottenham manager George Graham has blasted the North London club for trying to smear his character through leaks to the press, just days after they dismissed him.

George Graham

The Scotsman released a statement following the publication of a story in a morning newspaper that Spurs' new owners, ENIC, have launched an investigation after finding £18,700 in cash in a drawer at White Hart Lane.

A statement from his lawyers read: "Mr Graham is disappointed that the club should now be feigning concern and using this scheme as a pretext to try and denigrate him in the newspapers.

Having supposedly sacked him for revealing confidential information it is surprising that once again the club is prepared to run its affairs through the leak of internal club information to the press."

According to Graham, the sum of money was from a scheme he had introduced whereby player fines imposed for minor breaches of discipline were collected for charity.

And Graham has insisted this was done with the full knowledge of the Tottenham board of directors.

"This was a tremendous way of raising money for an extremely good cause while at the same time reinforcing club discipline and generating positive PR both for the club and the players," he said.

Smith gets new Leeds deal

Leeds United striker Alan Smith signed a new five-year contract with the Champions League quarter-finalists last week.

The England under-21 international, a product of the club's youth programme, had three years to run on his previous deal but agreed a new contract which will keep him at Elland Road until 2006.

Smith played down stories in British newspapers that he was unsettled at Leeds.

"There has been the odd bit of speculation in the newspapers about me not being happy here but nothing could be further from the truth," he told his personal website. "I'm very happy at Leeds.

"I was never worried because I knew I was always going to sign. Now I'm happy to stay for the next five years and even beyond that."

Alan Smith

Smith has struggled to hold down a regular place in the Leeds side for Premier League matches but has started the majority of the club's Champions League games, scoring the winner in the 1-0 win at Lazio in December.

He has scored 12 goals in 34 starts for United this season, including six in the Champions League, and was considered unlucky to miss out on Sven Goran Eriksson's England squad.

Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale said: "This emphasises our determination to look after and reward the home grown players we have developed here and we are delighted that Alan has put pen to paper."

2002 WORLD CUP: The Qualifiers

SPAIN	5
LIECHENSTEIN	0

Spain extended their lead at the top of group seven beating underdogs Liechtenstein 5-0 in their World Cup qualifier at the Rico Perez stadium.

A Gaizka Mendieta double (36 and 81), a neat back heel from Raul (68) and a diving header from Ivan Helguera (20) were complemented by a Fernando Hierro penalty to give the group leaders a comfortable win.

Hierro's 54th minute penalty was his 26th goal for his country and took him level with Emilio Butragueno as Spain's leading goalscorer, a remarkable record given the fact that he has played most of his 77 games as a defender.

Liechtenstein, who had openly admitted before the game that their primary aim was to concede as few goals as possible, set about their task in spirited fashion as they restricted the home side to just two clear chances in the first 15 minutes.

The first came on six minutes after a neat interchange of passes from Gaizka Mendieta and Javi Moreno, set up Raul. But the Real Madrid striker swept wide and two minutes later his angled header brushed the post.

Barcelona midfielder Pep Guardiola tried his luck from outside the area, but could not keep his shot down his 19th minute free kick was palmed on to the bar by keeper Peter Jehle.

It was Mendieta who eventually prised open the Liechtenstein defence. The Valencia midfielder made room for himself on the right and sent a teasing cross spinning into the area. Ivan Helguera then fired home with his powerful diving header.

Alaves striker Javi Moreno laid back a neat headed pass to Mendieta on the edge of the area and the Valencia midfielder blasted home with a fierce first-time strike.

The Liechtenstein players began to tire in the second half and Spain created opportunities with ease.

Real Madrid's Raul then added a fourth when he scored with a neat back heel after he pounced on a rebound from a Miguel Angel Nadal shot.

Mendieta capped an impressive performance with his second goal — his fifth for Spain — 10 minutes from time.

Picking up the ball well outside the area on the right, he teed it up and then curled in a superb shot into the far corner.

The win enabled Spain to stretch their unbeaten home record in World Cup qualifiers to 36 matches, a total that comprises 31 wins and five draws and dates back to 1934.

Liechenstein defenders pursue Spanish striker, Raul (right)

NETHERLANDS	5
ANDORRA	0

The Netherlands got their World Cup campaign back on track, beating Andorra 5-0 to earn three much-needed points in their European group two qualifying match.

Second half substitute Pierre van Hooijdonk scored twice in his first game for the Dutch under coach Louis van Gaal, whose team still trail group leaders Portugal by three points after the 5-0 win.

The Dutch have seven points from four games and are seeking at least a draw in Wednesday's match against Portugal in Porto.

In the ninth minute, Patrick Kluivert headed home a Paul Bosvelt cross, the 30th goal of his international career.

The tempo then slowed, with the Dutch waiting until the 36th minute for their next goal. A Mark van Bommel shot ricocheted back to the feet of Chelsea striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, who easily converted to take them to halftime 2-0 in front.

Van Hooijdonk had an impressive outing, scoring on the hour, just two minutes after he had come on the pitch. He grabbed his second, a superb left foot volley from a Philip Cocu cross, 11 minutes later.

If Van Gaal repeats the two-striker format against Portugal, Van Hooijdonk may well be the preferred choice, ahead of Hasselbaink, to partner Kluivert up front.

The Dutch, in third place in group two after Ireland beat Cyprus 4-0, need a draw or a win in that match after losing at home to Portugal in October. Van Gaal, while pleased with Saturday's victory, was giving nothing away.

"Andorra has never lost by more than five goals. We got five and are now the best goal scorers in the group," he said.

He was certainly pleased with the performance of Barcelona's Boudewijn Zenden, who had a particularly busy first half on the right wing, although club team-mate Marc Overmars was disappointing on the left.

Bosvelt, who set up the Netherlands' second goal, also played well, but seems likely to lose his spot to regular Michael Reiziger on Wednesday.

Dutch striker, Pierre Van Hooidjonk celebrates his goal against Andorra.

ROMANIA	0
ITALY	2

Two opportunist first-half goals from Filippo Inzaghi helped Italy a step closer to the 2002 World Cup finals with a 2-0 win over Romania.

That left the home side's hopes of qualifying in tatters.

Inzaghi's two strikes, the first a 28th minute deflection off Daniel Prodan and the second a short-range header four minutes later, lifted Italy five points clear at the top of qualifying group eight.

A gutsy performance from Adrian Ilie in his first match back after a two-month lay-off failed to produce goals for Romania, whose poor passing and ball control on a sodden pitch let down many of their attacks.

The visitors exploited a weak Romanian defence, depleted by the last-minute withdrawal of Ajax's Christian Chivu with a cold, to create a string of chances for Inzaghi and Alessandro Del Piero on the break.

Neither was able to convert, however, and Italy retreated deep into their own half in the last 20 minutes as the home side threw everything forward. But a Dennis Serban shot into the side-netting was the closest they came to scoring.

Italian striker, Alessandro Del Pierro (right) goes past Romanian midfielder, Viorel Moldovan

Yugoslav skipper, Sinisa Mihajlovic scores from a freekick against Switzerland.

YUGOSLAVIA	1
SWITZERLAND	1

Switzerland's veteran striker Stephane Chapuisat struck in the 84th minute to earn his team a 1-1 draw against Yugoslavia in a World Cup group one qualifier in Belgrade.

The Yugoslavs, cheered on by a capacity 36,000 crowd, took a 68th-minute lead when skipper Sinisa Mihajlovic gave Swiss goalkeeper Marco Pascolo no chance with a curling free-kick from 25 metres out.

The home side created little in a lacklustre first half and were jeered off at the interval. Savo Milosevic came close to breaking the deadlock with a close-range header which sailed just over the bar in the sixth minute.

Yugoslavia pressed forward after the break and were rewarded for their efforts with a trademark Mihajlovic free-kick after striker Mateja Kezman was felled by Johann Vogel.

But the Swiss refused to lie down and grabbed a deserved equaliser six minutes from time when Chapuisat headed home a perfect Johann Lonfat cross.

Milosevic could have clinched a last-minute winner for Yugoslavia but Pascolo made a diving save to deny the striker from close range.

Switzerland now have five points from four games and Yugoslavia four points from two games and are respectively third and fourth in group one.

Russia lead the group with seven points from three games after Saturday's 1-1 draw with Slovenia, who are second with six points from four games.

2002 WORLD CUP: The Qualifiers

N. IRELAND 0 — CZECH REPUB. 1

The Czech Republic reinforced their dominance at the top of World Cup qualifying group three with a 1-0 win over Northern Ireland whose hopes of reaching next year's finals have all but evaporated.

Lazio playmaker Pavel Nedved was the match winner for the visitors with the only goal of the game on 12 minutes.

Northern Ireland defender Aaron Hughes, at fault for a goal against Norway last month, hesitated on the edge of the penalty area after a run from Tomas Rosicky and livewire Nedved nipped in to slot the ball past Roy Carroll from 12 yards.

The Czechs always looked dangerous on the counter-attack but Sammy McIlroy's men almost snatched a draw three minutes from time when substitute Phil Gray smashed a shot against the crossbar and when he seemed certain to score with the second attempt Roman Tyce cleared off the line.

N. Ireland's Stuart Elliott (right) is blocked by a Czech defender.

SCOTLAND 2 — BELGIUM 2

Belgium coach Robert Waseige hailed his side for finding the mental toughness to come back and snatch a 2-2 World Cup draw against Scotland at Hampden Park.

Substitute Daniel van Buyten rescued Belgium — who played for more than an hour with 10 men after Eric Deflandre's dismissal — with an equaliser two minutes into injury time of the European group six match.

The Scots, who had been 2-0 up through a Billy Dodds double, seemed certain to assume leadership of the group until defender van Buyten rose to head in Sven Vermant's cross from 10 metres for his first international goal.

Scotland coach Craig Brown was visibly stunned by Belgium's comeback, saying: "The manner and the timing of their equaliser makes it pretty heartbreaking for us. It is a real psychological blow, but we will pick ourselves up."

Yet, after half an hour it seemed as if the only question would surround Scotland's winning margin as they surged ahead.

Dodds struck after just 70 seconds, finishing off a fine move involving Colin Hendry, Don Hutchison and Craig Burley, whose low cross was steered in by the Rangers striker from six metres with a glancing shot.

Dodds made it 2-0 in 29 minutes when Hendry's header from Burley's corner was blocked on the line by Deflandre, using his arms. The defender was sent off before Dodds coolly sent goalkeeper Geert De Vlieger the wrong way from the penalty for his sixth international goal.

Within two minutes Marc Wilmots had given Belgium a glimmer of hope, heading a cross from substitute Bob Peeters past goalkeeper Neil Sullivan.

But Scotland still looked more likely to score again until van Buyten's intervention.

Belgian substitute, Daniel Van Buyten (right) celebrated with his teammates after scoring against Scotland.

ENGLAND 2 — FINLAND 1

Sven Goran Eriksson's competitive England era got off to a winning start as goals by Michael Owen and David Beckham gave his side a 2-1 World Cup qualifying victory over Finland at Anfield.

England struggled in the early stages and Finland took a shock lead in the 26th minute when midfielder Aki Riihilahti headed in a corner, aided by a deflection from Gary Neville but Owen equalised from the edge of the box just before halftime.

A superb David Beckham shot four minutes after the break put England ahead and sparked a confident 20 minute spell which saw Owen hit the bar with a header.

They continued to press forward in the latter stages but could not find the third goal.

The win, while not entirely convincing, nevertheless settles England's 2002 World Cup campaign which had begun with a home defeat by Germany and goalless draw in Helsinki.

Beckham was rested from his club Manchester United's last two matches after some poor performances, but inspired by wearing the captain's armband, drove England on to a victory that takes Sven Goran Eriksson's teamto four points from their opening three matches in World Cup qualifying Group 9.

He said: "We do feel our World Cup campaign has been revived, but if we go to Albania and get a bad result this win will mean nothing.

"We must not get carried away. We scraped through, but the character in the team was brilliant, we fought all the way and deserved it."

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson admitted he felt the rest United had allowed Beckham contributing to his best display in an England shirt since Euro 2000.

Before the match the 25-year-old had claimed he felt refreshed and sharper than in the previous few months.

Eriksson said: "He was excellent. I hope Alex Ferguson rests him more often."

Bt the Swede admitted Steven Gerrard is doubtful for Wednesday's match in Albania.

He added: "We will wait until Sunday but he is very sore."

Andy Cole, England forward, is challenged by Finn defender, Sami Hyypia.

GERMANY 2 — ALBANIA 1

Germany needed a late goal from newcomer Miroslav Klose to beat a brave Albanian side 2-1 in a World Cup qualifier.

The young Kaiserslautern striker, who came on in the second half to win his first cap, hit the winner with a diving header with two minutes remaining in a dull game with few highlights.

Midfielder Sebastian Deisler had put the home team in front with a thunderous drive from some 25 metres five minutes into the second half but the vistors levelled with a powerful effort from 20 metres by midfielder Bledar Kola 15 minutes later.

The 22,500 crowd packing the Leverkusen stadium whistled and jeered until the 22-year-old Klose saved Germany from an embarrassing result.

The result gave the Germans a perfect score of nine points from three games in group nine, ideally placed to make it to next year's finals in Japan and South Korea.

Germany started well, threatening just three minutes into the match when captain Oliver Bierhoff headed the ball just over the bar from a deflected Sebastian Deisler cross.

The home side wasted another opportunity four minutes later with a header from Marco Bode wich went just wide.

Albania, fired up by a 2-0 win over Greece in their previous qualifier, warned they could be dangerous too with an effort from inside the box by striker Igli Tare in the 19th minute which tested German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn's vigilance.

A long-range drive from striker Alban Bushi which flew narrowly wide five minutes later provided further evidence of the visitors' determination.

Germany striker, Oliver Bierhoff receiving treatment before the game against Albania.

NEXT FIXTURES

Group 1
(Wednesday) March 28
Russia v Faroe Islands
Switzerland v Luxembourg
Slovenia v Yugoslavia

Group 2
(Wednesday) March 28
Portugal v Netherlands
Cyprus v Estonia
Andorra v Ireland

Group 3
(Wednesday) March 28
Czech Republic v Denmark
Bulgaria v Northern Ireland

Group 4
(Wednesday) March 28
Moldova v Sweden
Slovakia v Azerbaijan
Macedonia v Turkey

Group 5
(Wednesday) March 28
Poland v Armenia
Wales v Ukraine
Belarus v Norway

Group 6
(Wednesday) March 28
Scotland v San Marino

Group 7
(Wednesday) March 28
Liechtenstein v Bosnia
Austria v Israel

Group 8
(Wednesday) March 28
Georgia v Romania
Italy v Lithuania

Group 9
(Wednesday) March 28
Albania v England
Greece v Germany

ALL THE RESULTS

England	2	Finland	1
Germany	2	Albania	1
Yugoslavia	1	Switzerland	1
Russia	1	Slovenia	1
Luxembourg	0	Faroe Islands	2
Andorra	0	Netherlands	5
Cyprus	0	Ireland	4
N. Ireland	0	Czech Rep.	1
Bulgaria	2	Iceland	1
Malta	0	Denmark	5
Sweden	1	Macedonia	0
Turkey	1	Slovakia	1
Azerbaijan	0	Moldova	0
Ukraine	0	Belarus	0
Norway	2	Poland	3
Armenia	2	Wales	2
Croatia	4	Latvia	1
Scotlan	2	Belgium	2
Bosnia	1	Austria	1
Spain	5	Liechtenstein	0
Hungary	1	Lithuania	1
Romania	0	Italy	2

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FIFA World Rankings

(Valid until April 11)

1	Brazil	814	70	Burkina Faso	494	139	St Kitts & Nevis	277
2	France	797	71	Macedonia FYR	492	140	St Lucia	275
3	Argentina	771	72=	Congo DR	488	141	Korea DPR	267
4	Portugal	738	72=	Uzbekistan	488	142	Luxemburg	265
5	Italy	735	74	Bosnia-Her	487	143	Bangladesh	262
6	Czech Republic	734	75=	Albania	476	144	Tanzania	260
7	Spain	727	75=	**AUSTRALIA**	476	145	Ant and Barbuda	248
8	Paraguay	703	77	China PR	475	146	Andorra	245
9	Netherlands	702	78	Liberia	474	147	Benin	243
10	Yugoslavia	701	79	Guinea	473	148	Grenada	242
11	Germany	698	80	Cuba	471	149	Liechtenstein	240
12	Mexico	684	81	Algeria	470	150	Botswana	232
13	Romania	680	82	Iraq	469	151	Sri Lanka	226
14	Norway	670	83	Togo	468	152	Dominican Rep	
15	Colombia	667	84	Senegal	461	153	Dominica	220
16	England	659	85	El Salvador	459	154	Bermuda	217
17	Croatia	656	85	Qatar	459	155	Maldives	216
18	United States	655	87	Namibia	458	156	Gambia	214
19	Russia	639	88	Haiti	456	157	Cape Verde Is	209
20	South Africa	631	89	Lithuania	453	158	Eritrea	196
21	Sweden	629	90	Congo	451	159	Palestine	194
22	Chile	623	91	Latvia	449	160	Cayman Islands	193
23	Slovakia	620	92	New Zealand	446	161=	Kyrgyzstan	188
24	Denmark	619	93	Armenia	440	161=	Yemen	188
25	Saudi Arabia	617	94	Gabon	438	163	Mauritania	187
26	Belgium	615	95	Vietnam SR	437	164	Chinese Taipei	185
27	Tunisia	612	96	Northern Ireland	433	165=	Chad	173
28	Scotland	606	97	Moldova	426	166	Surinam	172
29	Turkey	605	98	Indonesia	425	167	Laos	170
30	Morocco	602	99	Belarus	423	168	San Marino	167
31	Trin & Tobago	597	100	Mali	420	169	British Virgin Is.	166
32	Poland	595	101	Oman	413	170	Nepal	165
33	Egypt	594	102=	Singapore	411	171	Vanuatu	163
33	Uruguay	594	102=	Syria	411	172	Cambodia	157
35	Ireland Republic	590	104	Uganda	408	173	Cook Islands	156
36	Cameroon	587	105	Jordan	407	174	Samoa	139
37	Iran	586	106	Kenya	406	175	Netherlands Ant	133
38	Ukraine	584	107	Barbados	404	176	Cent African Rep.	127
39	Korea Republic	582	108	Malaysia	400	177	Guinea-Bissau	125
40	Slovenia	581	109	Wales	383	178	Bahamas	116
41	Israel	576	110	Lebanon	382	179=	Macao	115
42	Japan	575	111	Venezuela	375	179=	Philippines	115
43	Jamaica	570	112	Madagascar		179=	Sao Tome e Principe	115
44	Greece	568	113	Malawi	362	182	Niger	106
45	Austria	567	114	Bahrain	360	183	Guyana	104
46	Cote d' Ivoire	564	115=	Libya	359	184	Aruba	100
47	Hungary	560	115=	Mozambique	340	185	Tonga	98
48	Peru	555	117	Azerbaijan	346	186	Belize	92
49	Bulgaria	553	118	Mauritius	342	187	Equatorial Guinea	90
49	Honduras	553	119	Faroe Islands	332	188	Mongolia	89
51	Zambia	552	120	Sudan	327	189	Seychelles	83
52	Nigeria	545	121	Malta	322	190	Djibouti	79
53	Ecuador	543	122	Kazakhstan	321	191	Pakistan	72
54=	Angola	541	123	Panama	316	192	Nicaragua	71
54=	Iceland	541	124	India	312	193	PNG	65
56	Costa Rica	539	125	Hong Kong	308	194	Darussalam	64
57	Finland	535	126	Myanmar	306	195	Puerto Rico	63
58	Guatemala	529	127	Burundi	305	196	Somalia	59
59	Ghana	526	128	Swaziland	304	197	Anguilla	58
60	Switzerland	525	129	Turkmenistan	303	198	US Virgin Islands	33
61	Thailand	521	130	St Vincent/Gr	300	199	Guam	29
62	Cyprus	516	131	Rwanda	298	200	Turks and Caicos Islands	22
63	Canada	511	132	Lesotho	290	201	Bhutan	15
64	UAE	507	133	Fiji	289	202	Montserrat	11
65	Zimbabwe	506	134=	Sierra Leone	288	203	American Samoa	8
66=	Bolivia	503	134=	Solomon Is.	288			
66=	Georgia	503	136	Tahiti	286			
66=	Kuwait	503	137	Ethiopia	280			
69	Estonia	502	138	Tajikistan	279			

***Note:** Teams inactive since 1991 and teams which have not played yet do not appear in the table.*

Ziege ignites rumble in German camp

Rudi Voeller has come under fire again after Liverpool defender Christian Ziege became the latest player to complain about his treatment by the German coach.

"Long-term it's just not enough for me to sit on the bench.

I'll keep an eye on the situation for the time being, but not until the World Cup in 2002," 29-year-old Ziege told Germany's SID sport news agency.

Ziege has 55 international caps but has found himself on the substitutes bench in two of Germany's last three matches.

Ziege's remarks come just days after captain Oliver Bierhoff said he felt Voeller did not give him the support his predecessors had enjoyed from other coaches.

Voeller, the popular former international striker, took over a German team still smarting from a poor performance at Euro 2000 and under his stewardship Germany enjoyed an early revival, winning their first three matches.

But friendly defeats by Denmark in November and against World Champions France in Paris last month have soured the picture and led to criticism both from inside and outside the German camp.

Christian Ziege: Angry at being left on the bench.

Petit hints at quitting Barcelona

Emmanuel Petit: Unhappy at Barcelona.

France midfielder Emmanuel Petit, who has failed to establish a first team place at Barcelona, hinted last week he could leave the Spanish side.

"It's too early to bet on my future but it would be very difficult for me and for my familly to face another season like the one I spent," Petit said at the French training camp in Clairefontaine.

"I need some time to make up my mind because I must think about my wife, too. I'd like to win a trophy this year either the UEFA Cup or the Spanish Cup at least to leave with something." Petit, joined Barcelona from Arsenal at the end of last season.

Petit has told Spanish magazine Don Balon that he was convinced his former boss at Arsenal, Arsene Wenger, would not be the new coach at the Catalan club.

Barca are widely expected to appoint a new head coach at the end of the season, with Llorenc Serra Ferrer returning to his former job of technical director, and the Spanish press have speculated that Wenger was one of the prime candidates.

"We've known each other for a long time and to me he's more than a father. He's one of the people I respect most in the world," Petit told the magazine.

Shearer seeks injury cure in US

Newcastle United striker Alan Shearer has flown to the United States to find out if he needs further surgery on a persistent knee injury, the English Premier League club has said.

Shearer, the 30-year-old former England captain, has missed most of the season through injury and has consulted renowned knee specialist Dr Richard Steadman in the United States.

A Newcastle spokesman said: "Alan has undergone initial tests and is due to meet again with Dr Steadman last week.

"It is not known at this stage whether another operation will be required or whether rest will be advised."

Shearer first suffered the injury at the European championships last year.

He had three steroid injections in a bid to play through the problem, but decided to undergo surgery in December.

After making a first team comeback in February, he broke down in training and British newspapers have reported he will miss the rest of the season.

Newcastle say they expect to make another statement on Shearer's progress before the end of the week.

Alan Shearer: Off to US in search of cure.

Carbone's Boro move flops

Benito Carbone's proposed move from Bradford City to English Premier League rivals Middlesbrough fell through just before the English transfer deadline last Thursday.

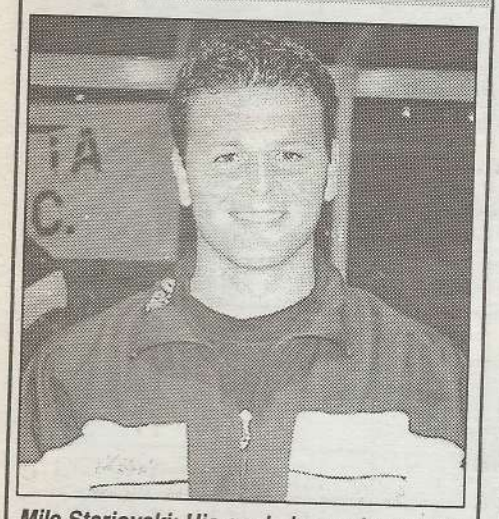
The Italian forward, set to leave Bradford on a free transfer, had even passed a medical at the Riverside stadium but the deal collapsed after both parties failed to agree on the length of the player's contract, the BBC reported.

Middlesbrough offered a one-year deal, while Carbone was holding out for a three-year offer. Carbone will remain at Bradford, seven points adrift at the bottom of the premier league, at least until the end of the season.

WORLD

WORLD RESULTS ... WORLD RESULTS ...

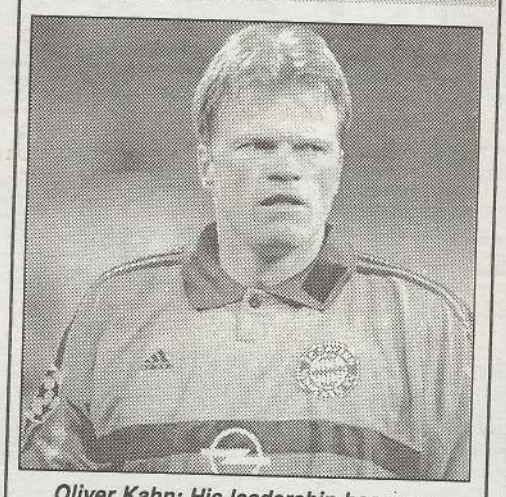
FRENCH CHAMPIONNAT



Mile Sterjovski: His goals have placed Lille at top of the Championnat.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Lille	29	15	8	6	35	19	53
2. Nantes	29	16	5	8	49	34	53
3. O. Lyon	29	12	13	4	42	25	49
4. G. Bordeaux	29	13	10	6	40	25	49
5. Sedan	29	13	8	8	39	31	47
6. Stade Rennes	29	12	6	11	39	31	42
7. Troyes	29	11	9	9	42	43	42
8. Guingamp	29	11	8	10	34	38	41
9. AJ Auxerre	29	11	7	11	30	34	40
10. Bastia	29	11	6	12	36	34	39
11. Monaco	29	11	5	13	45	42	38
12. PSG	29	10	6	13	36	39	36
13. RC Lens	29	8	10	11	31	32	34
14. O. Marseille	29	9	6	14	26	34	33
15. Metz	28	7	10	11	28	39	31
16. St Etienne	29	9	7	13	37	47	27
17. Toulouse	29	5	10	14	26	41	25
18. Strasbourg	28	5	8	15	24	51	23

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA



Oliver Kahn: His leadership has once again placed Bayern Munich atop the Bundesliga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Bayern Munich	26	15	4	7	51	28	49
2. B. Leverkusen	26	14	4	8	46	30	46
3. Kaiserslautern	26	14	4	8	39	33	46
4. B. Dortmund	26	13	6	7	44	34	45
5. Schalke 04	26	12	7	7	43	26	43
6. Hertha Berlin	26	14	1	11	47	44	43
7. Cologne	26	10	7	9	44	39	37
8. Werder Bremen	26	10	7	9	36	38	37
9. VfL Wolfsburg	26	9	9	8	49	34	36
10. SC Freiburg	26	9	9	8	33	29	36
11. 1860 Munich	26	9	7	10	33	42	34
12. Hansa Rostock	26	10	4	12	27	37	34
13. Hamburg SV	26	9	5	12	49	48	32
14. E. Cottbus	26	9	2	15	32	43	29
15. E. Frankfurt	26	8	5	13	31	47	29
16. Unterhaching	26	7	7	12	25	44	28
17. VfB Stuttgart	26	6	9	11	35	40	27
18. VfL Bochum	26	5	5	16	22	50	20

PRIMERA LIGA

Raul: His goals have helped establish Real Madrid at the top of the Liga.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Real Madrid	27	17	5	5	60	30	56
2. Deportivo	27	15	6	6	52	31	51
3. Valencia	27	14	7	6	43	21	49
4. Barcelona	27	13	7	7	55	38	46
5. Real Mallorca	27	12	9	6	37	33	45
6. Villarreal	27	12	6	9	38	32	42
7. Alaves	27	11	6	10	39	34	39
8. Malaga	27	11	5	11	44	42	38
9. Celta Vigo	27	10	8	9	35	38	38
10. Espanyol	27	10	6	11	34	30	36
11. Ath. Bilbao	27	9	9	9	36	39	36
12. Las Palmas	27	10	5	12	28	43	35
13. R. Vallecano	27	8	10	9	45	46	34
14. R. Zaragoza	27	7	11	9	38	39	32
15. Valladolid	27	7	11	9	30	32	32
16. Real Oviedo	27	9	4	14	35	48	31
17. Numancia	27	7	6	14	27	46	27
18. Real Sociedad	27	6	7	14	29	55	25
19. Osasuna	27	5	9	13	30	43	24

ENGLISH PREMIERSHIP

Arsenal's Thierry Henry, whose goals have failed to stop run away Man Utd.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Man. Utd	30	21	7	2	68	19	70
2. Arsenal	30	15	9	6	47	29	54
3. Ipswich Town	30	15	4	11	44	36	49
4. Sunderland	30	13	9	8	37	30	48
5. Leeds United	30	13	8	9	44	38	47
6. Liverpool	28	13	7	8	48	31	46
7. Leicester City	29	13	6	10	31	31	45
8. Southampton	29	12	8	9	34	34	44
9. Chelsea	29	11	9	9	52	37	42
10. Charlton Ath.	30	11	9	10	39	42	42
11. Hotspur	30	10	9	11	36	38	39
12. Aston Villa	29	9	11	9	31	30	38
13. N'castle Utd	29	11	5	13	34	41	38
14. West Ham Utd	30	8	11	11	35	38	35
15. Derby County	30	8	11	11	31	45	35
16. Everton	30	8	8	14	31	44	32
17. M'brough	30	6	13	11	33	36	31
18. Man.City	30	6	9	15	33	49	27
19. Coventry City	30	5	9	16	26	51	24

ITALIAN SERIE A

Gabriel Batistuta: Roma leading goalscorer.

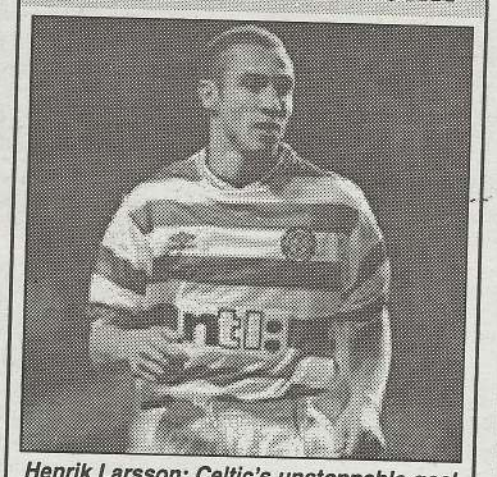
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. AS Roma	23	17	4	2	44	17	55
2. Juventus	23	14	6	3	40	19	48
3. Lazio	23	14	4	5	44	26	46
4. Parma	23	11	6	6	38	21	39
5. Inter Milan	23	9	7	7	29	26	34
6. A. Bergamo	22	8	9	5	25	19	23
7. AC Milan	23	8	9	6	37	35	33
8. Bologna	23	9	5	9	29	29	32
9. Perugia	23	8	7	8	28	30	31
10. Lecce	23	7	8	8	29	35	29
11. Fiorentina	23	6	11	6	37	33	29
12. Udinese	23	9	1	13	36	40	28
13. Verona	23	6	6	11	28	41	24
14. Vicenza	23	6	5	12	22	34	23
15. Napoli	23	5	7	11	23	35	22
16. Brescia	22	4	9	9	25	32	21
17. Reggina	23	5	4	14	17	36	19
18. Bari	23	4	4	15	18	41	16

DUTCH FIRST DIVISION

Ruud Van Nistelrooy: PSV striker.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. PSV	25	18	6	1	54	15	60
2. Feyenoord	25	18	2	5	54	23	56
3. Ajax	25	15	5	5	69	30	50
4. Roda JC	25	13	5	7	45	30	44
5. Waalwijk	25	12	8	5	34	22	44
6. Vitesse Arnhem	25	12	7	6	44	36	43
7. Willem II	25	10	7	8	45	37	37
8. Utrecht	24	10	5	9	40	39	35
9. Nijmegen	25	7	13	5	32	30	34
10. Heerenveen	24	7	10	7	30	31	31
11. NAC Breda	25	8	7	10	31	37	31
12. T. Enschede	25	7	8	10	36	48	29
13. Groningen	25	7	7	11	30	37	28
14. AZ Alkmaar	25	7	6	12	35	50	27
15. S. Rotterdam	25	5	5	15	35	56	20
16. Fortuna Sittard	25	4	6	15	18	48	18
17. Graafschap	25	5	2	18	29	55	17
18. Roosendaal	25	4	1	20	31	69	13

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP



Henrik Larsson: Celtic's unstoppable goal machine.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Celtic	30	25	4	1	77	23	79
2. Rangers	30	21	3	6	58	28	66
3. Hibernian	31	17	9	5	52	23	60
4. Kilmarnock	30	13	6	11	34	39	45
5. Hearts	31	12	7	12	48	43	43
6. D. Athletic	31	11	7	13	30	45	40
7. Dundee	30	10	7	13	42	37	37
8. Motherwell	31	10	6	15	36	45	36
9. Aberdeen	29	7	11	11	30	41	32
10. St Johnstone	30	7	10	13	30	44	31
11. D. United	30	4	7	19	26	53	19
12. St Mirren	31	5	3	23	20	62	18

BELGIUM FIRST DIVISION

Tomas Radzinski: Anderlecht striker.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1. Anderlecht	26	20	5	1	70	21	65
2. Club Bruges	26	17	8	1	67	20	59
3. Stand. Liege	26	13	9	4	61	31	48
4. Ghent	26	13	7	6	48	36	46
5. Mouscron	26	13	5	8	51	34	44
6. Lokeren	26	12	7	7	39	32	43
7. G. Beerschot	26	13	3	10	47	37	42
8. Westerlo	26	12	6	8	47	40	42
9. Charleroi	26	11	4	11	40	46	37
10. Lierse	26	10	6	10	35	32	36
11. Genk	26	8	7	11	31	36	31
12. Beveren	26	8	7	11	24	49	31
13. Antwerp	26	8	4	14	29	38	28
14. Aalst	26	6	6	14	26	53	24
15. Harelbeke	26	6	2	18	29	68	20
16. Sint-Truiden	26	4	6	16	24	44	18
17. La Louviere	26	3	9	14	22	46	18
18. Mechelen	26	3	7	16	31	58	16

No action across Europe over the weekend due to 2002 World Cup Qualifying Games

QANTAS
THE SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA

National Soccer League

	TOTAL							HOME						AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS	P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
SOUTH MELBOURNE	24	16	5	3	49	18	53	11	9	2	0	28	6	13	7	3	3	21	12
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	24	15	4	5	45	26	49	11	8	2	1	22	9	12	7	2	4	23	17
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	24	14	6	4	61	33	48	13	8	3	2	37	18	11	6	3	2	24	14
PERTH GLORY	24	13	7	4	60	31	46	12	9	2	1	35	9	12	4	5	3	25	22
MARCONI STALLIONS	24	11	6	7	36	30	39	13	7	3	3	24	17	11	4	3	4	12	12
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	24	11	5	8	47	39	38	12	6	3	3	24	16	12	5	2	5	23	23
ADELAIDE CITY FORCE	24	11	4	9	43	44	37	12	5	3	4	27	26	12	6	1	5	16	18
SYDNEY UNITED	24	10	5	9	36	43	35	11	6	3	2	17	16	13	4	2	7	19	30
PARRAMATTA POWER	24	10	2	12	35	39	32	12	5	1	6	20	21	12	5	1	6	15	18
FOOTBALL KINGZ	24	8	7	9	36	36	31	11	5	3	3	19	12	13	3	4	6	17	24
NORTHERN SPIRIT	24	8	6	10	33	32	30	12	4	3	5	14	12	12	4	3	5	19	21
BRISBANE STRIKERS	24	8	6	10	42	44	30	12	7	3	2	30	18	12	1	3	8	12	26
CANBERRA COSMOS	24	8	4	12	35	38	28	12	4	2	6	19	17	12	4	2	6	17	20
NEWCASTLE UNITED	24	5	8	11	25	46	23	13	4	2	7	10	20	11	1	6	4	15	23
EASTERN PRIDE	24	4	5	15	29	41	0*	12	2	5	4	15	17	13	2	0	11	14	22

Matches played against Carlton will result in all teams being awarded a 3-0 win and 3 competition points

*All points deducted due to breach of NSL Regulations — subject to appeal

BRISBANE STRIKERS 3
(Buljan 6, Foster 25 pen, Galekovic 73 og)
EASTERN PRIDE 1
(Fak 54m)

Venue: Ballymore. **Crowd:** 1, 576. **Referee:** C. Zetter.
Cautions: Srhoj (BS) 46, McKain (BS) 57, Galekovic (EP) 24.

Teams: BRISBANE STRIKERS: Baldock, Dreger, McKain, Grierson (Webber 85), Foster (Smeltz 56), Srhoj, McLaren, Meredith, Rech, Hews (Pilic 65), Buljan
EASTERN PRIDE: Galejovic, Fak, Gotis, Kim (Bell 4), Deak (Motsiopolous 53), Puca, Hutchinson, Sekulovski (Katz 78), Wearne, Atkinson, Conroy.

MARCONI STALLIONS 0
NORTHERN SPIRIT 0

Venue: Marconi Stadium. **Crowd:** 4,802. **Referee:** J. Blaney.
Cautions: Thompson (MS) 29, Spencer (NS) 55, Cunico (NS) 84.

Teams: MARCONI STALLIONS: Turnbull, Babic, Longo, Kim, Care, Gibson, Bell (Brownlie 88), Trajanovski, Zoric (Raulovic 82), Thompson (Afkos 88), Brodie.
NORTHERN SPIRIT: Henderson, Cunico, Langdon, Bingley, Enes, Cranney, Burgess, Spencer, Feeney (Watkins 88), Foster, Howson.

LEADING GOALSCORERS
After Round Twenty-three

B. DESPOTOVSKI	(Perth Glory)	16
D. MORI	(Perth Glory)	16
B. BURGESS	(Northern Spirit)	14
S. PETROVSKI	(W'gong Wolves)	14
A. THOMPSON	(Marconi/Carlton)	12
S. CHIPPERFIELD	(W'gong Wolves)	12

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 2
(Rajher 12, Pelikan 54)
FOOTBALL KINGZ 2
(Ibrahim 18, Lines 73)

Venue: Knights Stadium. **Crowd:** 5,126. **Referee:** P. Mur.
Cautions: Burton (FK) 85.

Teams: MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: Acevski, Vasilevski (Sulemani 58), R. Vargas, Ogenonovski, Rajher, Porter, Kiratzogiou, Pelikan (Nastevski 74), Marth, Jolic (Vukadin 84) Lapsarisky.
FOOTBALL KINGZ: Cuello, Lines, Osman (Bluhm 81), Jackson, Urlovic, Ibrahim, Ngata, Campbell (Davis 46), Cartwright, Douglas, Burton.

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 0
SOUTH MELBOURNE 1
(Trimboli 81)

Venue: WIN Stadium. **Crowd:** 8,485. **Referee:** M. Shield.
Cautions: Petrovski (WW) 20, Chipperfield (WW) 56, Middleby (WW) 70.

Teams: WOLLONGONG WOLVES: Anastasiadis, Souris, Ceccoli, Horsley, Reid, Petrovski (Mennillo 88), Young, Chipperfield, Huxley, Blake, Middleby.
SOUTH MELBOURNE: Petkovic, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Durakovic, Panapoulos, Coveny (Anastasiadis 76), Trimboli, Boutsianis, Vlahos (Lozanovski 84), Kisnorbo, Colosimo.

Player Of The Week

AHMAD ELRICH: Powers outstanding young talent had an inspired game in their 3-1 victory over Sydney Olympic.

CANBERRA COSMOS 1
(Cortes 71)
SYDNEY UNITED 2
(Menapi 5, Awaritefe 51)

Venue: Bruce Stadium. **Crowd:** 2,763. **Referee:** P. Green.
Cautions: Aliffi (CC) 45, Hooker (CC) 87, Rastall (SU) 90.

Teams: CANBERRA COSMOS: Konstantinou, Anthopoulos, Popovich (Purdue 80), Hagger (Imaya 59), Castro, Arranz, Lyons, Hooker, Miyazawa, Aliffi, Kemp (Cortes 55).
SYDNEY UNITED: Hughes, Olic, Bilokapic, Arrarte, Pondeljak, Maric, Deur (Rastall 87), Genc, Menapi (Burt 92), Awaritefe (Talevski 76), Webb.

PARRAMATTA POWER 3
(Bennett 25, Roodenburg 44, Elrich 67)
SYDNEY OLYMPIC 1
(Cardozo 87)

Venue: Parramatta Stadium. **Crowd:** 4,179. **Referee:** S. Micallef.
Cautions: Owens (SO) 70. Red Cards: Bennett (PP) 53.

Teams: PARRAMATTA POWER: Crews, Barrett, Elrich, Tobin, Griffiths (Miller 3 (Santalab 62)), Brown, Blagojevic, Thompson, Vrkic, Roodenburg (Eagleton 77), Bennett.
SYDNEY OLYMPIC: Bolton, Wilson, Baillie, Juric, Marusic, Halpin, Goutzioulis (Owens 46), Collina, MacAllister (Packer 46), Augerinos (Carle 46), Cardozo.

NEWCASTLE UNITED 1
(McManus 55)
PERTH GLORY 0

Venue: Marathon Stadium. **Crowd:** 5,328. **Referee:** C. Dionis.
Cautions: Harnwell (PG) 53, Harper (NU) 55, Zoricich (NU) 60, Roberts (NU) 66, McBreen (NU) 84, Dodd (NU) 89.

Teams: NEWCASTLE UNITED: Catlin, Roberts, Zoricich, McManus, Sprod, Dodd, Wilson, Buonavoglia, Trpcevski (Johnson 74), Masi (McBreen 80), Harper (Juchniewicz 74).
PERTH GLORY: Petkovic, Trajkovski, Harnwell, Naven, Miller, Edwards (Carbone 74), Despotovski, Edgar Junior, Morl, Faria, Pryce.

ROUND 25

FRIDAY MARCH 30
Northern Spirit . . . . . vs . . . . . Melbourne Knights
Football Kingz . . . . . vs . . . . . Brisbane Strikers
Adelaide City Force . . . . . vs . . . . . Marconi Stallions

SATURDAY MARCH 31
Eastern Pride . . . . . vs . . . . . Parramatta Power

SUNDAY APRIL 1
South Melbourne . . . . . vs . . . . . Newcastle United
Sydney United . . . . . vs . . . . . Wollongong Wolves
Sydney Olympic . . . . . vs . . . . . Canberra Cosmos

Perth Glory - Bye

ADELAIDE CITY
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